

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

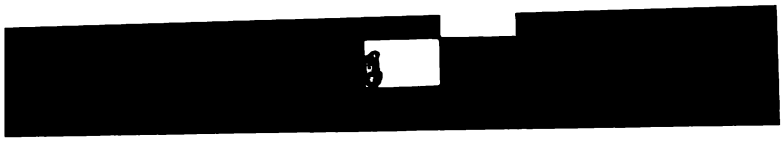
NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3433 07605073 5

THE ISSUES OF LIFE



MRS. JOHN VAN VORST





THE ISSUES OF LIFE



The Issues of Life

A Novel of the American Woman of To-day

BY

MRS. JOHN VAN VORST

Joint Author of
"The Woman Who Toils"



NEW YORK
Doubleday, Page & Company
1904



THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
288510
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
1904

Copyright, 1903, 1904, by
Mrs. John Van Vorst

Published, March, 1904

CONTENTS

PART I

Chapter		Page
I	The Knight Meets His "Rose"	3
II	Yes or No?	17
III	The Honeymoon	28
IV	Phillip's Ordeal	37
V	The Anniversary	42
VI	Where Is Progress?	50
VII	The Factory Versus the Home	60

PART II

VIII	The Lunch Club	75
IX	Martha Wants Her Freedom	91
X	A Cage Without Birds	103
XI	A College Girl's Beau	116
XII	A Soul at Bay	126
XIII	Organised Charity	137
XIV	The Phipps-Browns	153
XV	The Coaching Party	160
XVI	A Disturbing Confession	183
XVII	Race Suicide	191
XVIII	A Letter from Phillip	201
XIX	Avenging Nature	211



CONTENTS—*Continued*

PART III

Chapter		Page
XX	Too Late	225
XXI	An Empire Gown	238
XXII	Husband and Wife	250
XXIII	Love and Death	258
XXIV	A Turning	266
XXV	Grace Expiates	279
XXVI	The Last Meeting	290
XXVII	On the Operating-Table	299
XXVIII	Little Ballestier Goes to Sleep	308
XXIX	Phillip Has Something to Say	318
XXX	Home-keeping Hearts Are Happiest	330



LIST OF CHARACTERS

PHILLIP DILLON, the hero

MADELEINE DILLON, his wife

MARTHA SHEFFIELD, an unmarried girl

MRS. WALLACE, a "new woman"

BALLESTIER WALLACE, her child

ROBERT SOUTHERLAND, a rich young man

MRS. PHIPPS-BROWN, a society woman

PHIPPS-BROWN, her husband

MARY EVANS, a college graduate

GRACE WESTERVELT, a rich society girl

MRS. ALIDA PENFOLD, the wife of a poor artist

CLYDE PENFOLD, the poor artist

ROBERT VAN ALLAN, a married man who is separated from his wife

FRANK FAXON, a lawyer who wishes to marry Martha Sheffield

MRS. LEMON, a woman without theories

MR. BRADFORD, MR. WALLACE, FANNY (a servant), WALTER WOOD, SYDNEY MURRAY, MR. CHARLES EVANS, all minor characters





PART I





THE ISSUES OF LIFE

CHAPTER I

The Knight Meets His "Rose"

"Keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life."—*Proverbs.*

WHEN breakfast was over Madeleine Bradford went with her father into his study. The spacious walls were covered with books. On the centre-table, surrounded by a sea of papers and manuscripts, the photograph of Madeleine's mother, who had been dead many years, held a prominent place. Her full skirts and low-cut bodice were of the same epoch as the gold frame in which the picture had grown dim with time.

Mr. Bradford seated himself, his back to the windows which opened upon a garden gay with spring flowers, took a letter from his pocket, and said to his daughter:

"We are going to have a visitor, Madeleine."

"Yes? When?"

"This evening. I think I've spoken to you about Phillip Dillon, haven't I?"

Madeleine lifted her eyes.



"I don't remember that you ever have," she answered. "Who is he?"

The lawyer rapped his glasses against the letter in his hand.

"I know him chiefly in a professional way. He and his partner, Sydney Murray, have several times consulted me about their ranch. They own the Cedar Creek property, one of the most important west of Chicago. I can't do much for them, as I no longer practise, but they seem to have confidence in my judgment. They have got into a dispute over boundaries, and it is about this affair that Dillon is coming on to advise with me."

Madeleine could see that her father was gratified. His face was not that of a man who has been defeated in life, but of one who has accepted the part of suffering. In his eyes there was an expression of happiness attested by every line that time had traced about his brow and mouth. His joy went back to the days when the lady in the portrait on the table had been his living wife. His grief dated from the hour when he had returned, a widower, with his daughter and his two sons, to Elliston; his interest and ambition faded, like the picture, in a golden frame of memories.

In Elliston he had been a youth, a student, a lover. From his short journey into the world, where he had won an honourable name as a lawyer in a dozen years, he had gone back to his native town as one goes back to the ash-strewn hearth for warmth when the fire has died out.

"But, papa," said Madeleine, "who is Mr. Dillon?"

"He's rather a fine fellow, I should say, from all that I know of him. He's had the most varied career. I don't believe there's anything he hasn't tried. He's been in all sorts of business, knocked around the world, succeeded at one thing only to start another."

"Is he young?" the girl asked.

"Between thirty and thirty-five."

"Is he——" She hesitated. She certainly had no interest in this strange young man, but Elliston life was dull. There was so little to amuse or distract her in the monotony of the days which followed one upon the other without incident, that the thought of a visitor brought with it sentimental notions. So while she was indifferent to the answer her father might give, she was embarrassed at her question because of what was in her own mind.

"Is he what?" Mr. Bradford repeated.

"I was going to say is he married?"

"No, he has never been married," and after a pause added: "I hardly think he ever will be."

Madeleine spent her morning in preparing for the coming guest. She chose the finest linen; put flowers in the vases; had a fire laid in the spare room lest it might turn cold; and several times, as she travelled back and forth on her household errands, she said to herself: "Why will he never marry, I wonder?"



When all was ready she took a few favourite objects from her room into Dillon's. Since he was to remain a bachelor there was no impropriety in such attentions.

She was not told when he arrived. The two men had talked long in Mr. Bradford's study, and their guest had gone to his room when she finished dressing for dinner.

Madeleine as housekeeper was proud of the table. Under its burden of silver and glass it gleamed a white spot in the sombre dining-room whose veiled lights came through pink candle-shades. The girl took her usual place opposite her father. Mr. Dillon was seated at her right.

He was in a delicious stupor, as one who has lived long in silence and mistaken the absence of sound for deafness on his part. Ranch life, the lack of civilisation, tense effort, crudity of surroundings, a body pliant to physical energy, a mind adapted to prosaic problems—such was the monotonous routine from which he had come into this comfortable home. He was expanding deliciously, supersensitive to every new impression. His excitement had begun from the moment he arrived.

In his bath before dinner the fine linen towel he had used exhaled an odour of lavender, an odour which took him back to the days when he was a boy and the world he knew lay between a luxurious nursery where he was monarch and

another apartment where he fled for protection to a mother's arms.

The flowers on the dinner table, the soft velvet carpet, Mr. Bradford's voice, so musical by comparison with the rasping intonations which conduct ranch operations, and finally, as crowning loveliness, a girlish vision seated beside him, contributed to the magic that cradled his imagination.

Madeleine was dressed in mauve; her cheeks were flushed; there was a combination of demureness and mirth in her manner. Evidently glad that Dillon was there, she took a certain pride in the details of the dinner, and while there was maturity in her way of treating him as a guest, there was timidity in her attitude to him as a friend.

There is in every young girl a mysterious charm which appeals to men. She carries in her person a promise, the hope of happiness and future joys, which the most perfect married women in the world cannot offer. Dillon, if he had found himself with a brilliant, clever society woman, would have felt awkward, depressed. He would have compared his former self with the self of to-day, and the comparison would have been to the detriment of the latter. The refinement he had acquired at school and in his journeys about the world had suffered in the primitive routine of ranch existence. He would have feared that he had retrograded.

On the other hand, this young girl appeared to him like the very flower of civilisation, the "rose"

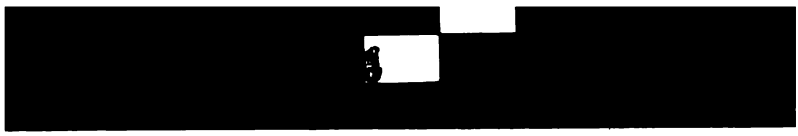
in quest of which medieval knights underwent the greatest hardships. Exactly as though he had been one of these ancient cavaliers himself, Dillon was seized with an inexplicable longing to say:

"All that I have attempted hitherto, all that I have thought, all that I have done is yours. And there is no limit to what I should aim at if you would be my recompense, if you would give me a chance to make you happy."

These words he could hear over and over again: the small inward voice repeated them so clearly and so loud that he did not see why the delightful young person beside him did not overhear them. The actual questions which he permitted himself to ask her were only a pretext for concealing his emotion.

He wanted to know whether she liked horseback riding; whether she cared for the country; if she minded being alone. He might, perhaps, never see her again after this short visit to Elliston, but for this one night at least he gave himself up to the delicious atmosphere of the home in which he was a visitor.

In high spirits himself, he wanted to communicate something of his buoyancy to those about him, to the girl whose eyes he could not meet. He wanted to claim her attention for himself. From stories of daily ranch life he hurried on to hunting tales; he described the winter storms, a spring



hurricane; he tried to appeal to her through the poetry of his life in the open.

The girl was roused from her timidity; she forgot herself. She followed the young ranchman and he led her on.

Mr. Bradford put various questions to his guest. For him this dinner was like that of the night before and all those that for weeks had preceded it, except that there were three at table instead of two, and that the third belonged to that band of strenuous youth who, with something between pain and lassitude, brought back to him recollections of his own early happiness.

"When we have smoked," he said to his daughter as dinner was over, "we shall find you in the parlour."

It was an hour before Dillon, alone, joined Madeleine.

"Mr. Bradford has some letters to write," he said. "He sent me in to talk with you. May I?"

"Of course," the girl responded.

Now that he found himself alone with her, Dillon felt no confidence. She had thought him a fool, perhaps, to have talked so much about himself at table.

And Madeleine, before this man who had so stirred her, telling simply his own adventures, was sure that anything she might have to say of Elliston or her routine of household duties would seem to him uninteresting. Yet even in their silence they



were communicating. An undercurrent of intimacy played between them. In their present meeting there was nothing of a first encounter.

"Why can't I know her past in an instant as I seem to know her?" Dillon asked himself.

And Madeleine's thoughts were these:

"Why do I feel with him as I never have with any one before? Why does it seem as if my whole existence were decided?"

They talked of commonplace things. Madeleine knew her father must be dozing in the library, and she hoped he would sleep on indefinitely. It was so agreeable, this conversation in which the lips spoke only foolishness while the emotions made the homely Bradford parlour seem like an enchanted place.

Dillon did not question the girl, but he chose his subjects so that she could not help responding. Eager as a listener, timid in giving her thoughts on any subject, interested always, her expression varied constantly, and Dillon, at the revelation of each new quality, was more surely charmed.

He said to her at last:

"Do you think you would like ranch life? You couldn't be happy on a ranch, could you?"

"Oh, I don't know," she answered hurriedly. "I have travelled so little. I have never lived anywhere but at Elliston, and in New York when I was a little girl, and then in the place where I went to boarding-school. I suppose ranching



would be rather rough, but I wouldn't mind that if——"

"If what?" He snatched the words before she could pronounce them.

"Why—if nothing—I was going to say if I were with my father."

"But your father wouldn't think of living on a ranch."

Dillon's tone was disappointed. It plainly said: "Could you be happy on a ranch with me?"

Madeleine understood and her heart answered: "If I were with the man I loved I think I could be happy anywhere." But she laughed. The idea of her father roughing it amused her. Dillon was disturbed by her merriment. A sudden doubt possessed him. Was he altogether mistaken in the girl? She was flippant, perhaps, like other girls he knew. It was probably only because he had been so long exiled that she seemed to him the true woman he had so often pictured in his solitude—not the student, not the progressive young creature who would rather know a thing than feel it, who applies her mind to science while her heart forgets its cunning. If he had mistaken her he must know it at once.

"I believe you won't agree with me," he said, meaning the contrary, "but I don't approve of the modern woman."

Madeleine looked up.

"You don't?" she said.



"No, I certainly do not. The modern idea is to educate women like men, to give them the same opportunities as men, to expect them to do the same things men do."

Madeleine listened with courteous attention.

"Women do seem to be doing almost everything nowadays," she said, and he went on with his argument.

"Knowledge and learning are not worth much unless they are balanced by experience. A woman may practise law or she may practise medicine, she may do any of a dozen things that men do, but her general experience cannot compare to man's. A woman can't have the experience a man has; nature and society both forbid. A woman who tries to live as a man does becomes a physical wreck or a moral renegade. And the girl who crowds her mind with facts which she can never compare to life loses her equilibrium. Don't you agree with me?"

"I've never thought much about it," was Miss Bradford's answer.

"You know you think they are perfect monsters, those college-bred females who expect to act like men and be treated like women."

"Don't you approve of college for women?" she asked, glad to have found this question.

"Certainly not. You didn't go to college, did you?"

"No."

And this personal question brought his thoughts back from women in general to the woman before him. Her small hands were folded demurely in her lap over the sewing on which she had been at work when he came in.

Dillon leaned forward; the firelight shone upon his handsome face; the brow, the eyes, the mouth, each brought a share of tenderness and power to the whole which was marked by his double heritage of New England and Southern blood.

"I don't want to discuss life," he said in another gentler and more serious tone of voice; "just now I am content merely to live. I am so happy to be here to-night in your home. It doesn't seem as though you and I were meeting for the first time."

"No," said Madeleine, flushing, "it doesn't."

Phillip felt himself suddenly possessed with the courage of the knights who went in quest of the "rose."

"And if you only knew what my existence has really been. I've done everything, and," he added, "I've suffered everything."

The girl was a trifle conscious at this word of confidence; she knew the man so little. He had done everything, he said. He had suffered. He was perhaps in love. He was perhaps that moment thinking of another woman. She could not show any sympathy, and at the same time she felt almost a jealousy for his sufferings.



Dillon had his mind and attention fixed on her. All that he might have done and seen would at least have a meaning if she took an interest in it.

"Yes," he repeated, "I have suffered. And since my mother died I have never until to-night wanted to speak of what was so near to me. You don't know what it is to be alone—always alone."

With a rush her confidence fled back. Everything that was feminine in her responded to this unspoken appeal for her tenderness as a consolation. She was instinctively glad now that he had done more than other men, seen and suffered more than others; in proportion to his need of her, her heart had shelter to offer as a refuge. They said nothing of what they felt, but whereas at first they had talked in a desultory manner, they now chatted together like companions—like the man and the woman who have something to ask and something to give.

Presently a certain preliminary stirring from the direction of the library warned them that Mr. Bradford would be soon returning. Dillon picked up Madeleine's scissors from the floor where they had fallen.

"May I have them, please?" she asked.

He handed them to her.

"Can you work and think?" he said.

She laughed.

"What a compliment! I've been working most of the evening!"

At this moment Mr. Bradford opened the door,



and neither of the young people said anything further than the formal wishes for a good night.

The following morning Dillon was closeted with Mr. Bradford. Madeleine passed often in the hall, where she could hear the voices of the two men. She loved her father better than any one in the world, and there was a satisfaction she could not have defined at the thought that this strange young man with whom she herself could not talk should be in intimate conversation with her favourite. It seemed as though the very closeness of relationship between the two, the dependence of the younger upon the older, in a way tightened the bond which had so mysteriously and agreeably attracted her to Dillon.

A week passed, during which the man and the girl were much together. They walked, talked and drove, and whatever their occupations, it seemed always as though they were but continuing a conversation begun at some former meeting when they had become more than friends. Madeleine no sooner found herself with Dillon than they drifted into the world between dream and reality which belongs only to those who are young and who for the first time are falling in love.

Finally one morning the sound of the carriage as it drove away over the gravel drive in front of the Bradford house was the last reminder that Dillon's visit had come to an end.

When lunch was served, and Madeleine went



with her father to the table, she had a pang of loneliness.

"Last night he was here beside me," she said to herself. And to Mr. Bradford she said:

"I shall be glad when the boys are back from school. The house seems empty without them."



CHAPTER II

Yes or No?

"It is not good that the man should be alone."—*Genesis.*

It was noon when Dillon reached the Cedar Creek station. As a rule, he no sooner descended from the train and installed his luggage in the trap, than he began to ply with questions the boy who had come to meet him: "All well at the ranch? No trouble with neighbours? Lost any cattle?"

To-day he said nothing. He took his place without speaking, gathered up the reins, and so distrait was he during the thirty miles' spin that Bill was more than once obliged to call out directions to his companion: "To the right! To the left! Look out for the ditch there! If we fall into it we'll have a —— of a time tugging ourselves out again!"

There had been a washout on the road. When at last the ponies, somewhat fagged, made a final spurt over the last hundred yards, it was night, and the sky was black and strewn with stars. Not a light shone out from the ranch-house windows. This Dillon remarked with a sense of relief. He realised now that he had come even more deliberately



than necessary over the last ten miles; he wanted to be alone. Though he had not admitted it to himself, he felt that it would be an ordeal in his present state of mind to face his partner, his friend and boon companion, Sydney Murray. He considered him the finest man he knew; for years they had weathered storm and sun together; an intimacy even more than brotherly existed between them. But yet Dillon was not ready to confide his love affairs to Sydney Murray.

His love affairs!

Could his feeling for Madeleine Bradford really be called love?

By dawn he had already flung himself into the saddle and was riding over the sleeping hillsides toward the rising sun. His memories of the visit at Elliston—would they not be dissipated by an hour's gallop against the morning breeze? After a night with ranch neighbours, when they had had one jack-pot too many and more whisky and soda than was good for any of them, Dillon had often proved the benefits of a turn in the crisp air. By twelve a man was completely made over, ready for a good lunch and a refreshing nap.

No sooner were his eyes open than he descended to the stable and saddled his favourite mare. Once on her back, he pressed her into a canter, suiting her pace to his state of mind.

Either the mare found the earth too wet or the rider was capricious. They had not gone a dozen



lengths when they fell first into a trot, then into a walk, and as the rider paid no attention to the direction they were following, the animal worked its way obliquely toward the fresh tracks left in the tall grass by the ranch-boys who had passed that way on horseback before dawn.

Dillon was an excellent shot. By way of educating his eye in judging distance he would pick out a particular spot, and as he galloped toward it count the number of lengths covered by his horse. He had acquired extraordinary precision in this way. Lifting himself in his stirrups as he searched for an object to fix upon, he scrutinised with physical pleasure the delicate tints of the horizon. But on this particular morning he seemed suddenly to go blind. The sun was up, the day was bright, yet again and again he fancied himself in shadow, shut in by the four walls of a dimly lighted dining-room. The green turf under his mare's hoofs took the aspect of a snowy table-cloth; there was no thorny bush in his way—only a delicate blonde girl who listened to him, smiling under the soft light of a pink candle-shade.

Not his eyes alone, but his ears also, were under the spell. Nervously he turned in his saddle to see who could have called him.

"Hello there! I say, Phillip! Hold on! Heavens, how ferocious you look! I have no designs upon your life. I'm not even armed, my dear fellow!"



"Oh, it's you, Sydney. I didn't hear you coming."

"I should say you heard nothing but your own thoughts. You've been going round and round in a circle for half an hour. First I thought you were on the tracks of some animal, and I didn't dare disturb you. But I guess whatever animal you're after must be in your own head. What's happened? A slump in stocks? How much have you lost?"

Murray's tone was not one of mere curiosity. He questioned his friend affectionately.

"What is it, old man?"

And Phillip responded, touched by this fraternal interest, and realising that what he had on his mind must be more serious than he supposed if Murray had perceived from his attitude twenty feet away that something was up.

"My trip was not altogether successful," he admitted. "Mr. Bradford is unable to take up our case for us, but he has given me excellent advice. I have a report from him which we can read together. We shall be able to fix things up all right—there's no doubt of that. That's not what's troubling me."

"What, then?" said Murray.

"It's a woman," was the answer.

The ranchman made his horse jump as though Dillon had cried out to him: "Look out! There's a rattlesnake!" He rode close up to his companion, his beast still trembling, and said with exaggerated seriousness:



"A woman? Where did you meet her? Not on the ranch, that's certain. There's not a woman to be found on this property. Not one," he affirmed, with an expression half assured, half terrified, like a child who has heard the story of Red Riding-Hood, and who repeats to herself that "there are no wolves in the nursery."

Dillon did not respond at once. Perhaps he had returned again to the dining-room at Elliston; perhaps he thought the open air unpropitious for a more explicit confidence.

In the uneasy silence a quarter of an hour passed without either man saying a word.

The horses walked fretful through the long grass, shaking their heads and sending the white foam flying from their bits. They seemed impatient. They wanted to join the herd yonder on the horizon or to get back to the ranch stables.

Suddenly Dillon said:

"I'm not worth my feed to-day. I am not equal to doing anything myself; and what's worse, I keep you from going about your round. Your whole heart and soul are in this ranch. Mine are not. The world begins and ends for you within the limits of our property. You not only own the horses and cattle, but they are your very offspring. You are as much their friend, almost, as you are mine. You understand them and they you. You are absorbed by this life. It may be a good thing; it may be a misfortune; but I am no longer satisfied



here. I want something more—something to which I can give myself completely—something different."

Murray shrugged his shoulders.

"I know exactly how you feel. I have been in just the same state myself, and I've seen others in it. I call it 'city fever.' It's as trying as hay fever, only it doesn't last as long. My advice would be to you to go home, take a rousing dose of quinine, and stay in bed until you feel better. I'll bring you up the latest news to-night. To-morrow you'll be all right again."

"I believe that's exactly what I shall do," was Dillon's answer.

But once back at the ranch-house, he did not go to bed, as his friend suggested. He cleared everything off the table—spurs, cartridge-belts, empty cartridges, pipes, knives and tobacco. From the drawer he took a sheet of letter paper; he chose a new pen, stuck it in the penholder, and on the envelope, in a firm handwriting, he traced the following address:

Miss Madeleine Bradford,
Elliston,
New York.

Then, without stopping, as though he had already thought out exactly what he wanted to say, he wrote:

"*Dear Miss Bradford*:

"I am back at the ranch once more, but in

reality I have not left you for a single moment. I seem to go on telling you endless things that are in my mind and that I have never wanted to say to anybody. I question you—I beg you to tell me what you think and feel, and you answer me with the frankness and sincerity, the charm, the modesty that captivated me and that I have never seen in any other woman.

"Don't find me indelicate or trivial. My words must have a true ring about them: you would bring out the best in any man. I don't need to ask you what your sentiments are, what your tastes are, what your dreams are. I want to call across the space to you: 'I feel as you do; I believe as you do. Let us traverse life together!'

"We talked of everything in that short week and we really said nothing. Since I have been alone my dream has taken a form; if yours has not vanished with the daylight you will listen to me. What I say here seems a plan for the perfect happiness of two souls. I would not ask you to come to this miserable, uncivilised ranch, to share a life which even a man finds hard and trying. Yet I tell you everything, for it is surely the moment to be frank—I should never wish to make a home in a large city. I should renounce the idea of gaining a large fortune if I marry. I should want to devote myself to my family, and not to my business simply, as so many do. I should not care to undertake responsibilities which would leave me no leisure for the one whose life would be by my side. If I turn over to my partner my interest in the ranch, I shall have from this and several other investments an income of $7,000 a year. I should never have more. This is not much for those who consider the



luxuries of a city life as the essential to happiness; but living as I would choose to live, it would insure protection, liberty and peace of mind.

"It seemed when I talked with you as though you felt as I do about these things. Perhaps it is only a mad fancy, but deep in my heart is the hope, the longing that you may become the companion of such a life as I describe.

"If I am wrong, I must know the truth at once, before this desire has grown any dearer. As soon as this reaches you, answer me by telegraph. Is this asking too much for a poor soul in torment? One word is enough—yes or no.

"Whatever you decide, whether it be my life's joy or the cruel ending of my dreams, remember that I shall always be your truest and most loyal friend."

When Dillon had read the letter twice he sealed it and called a boy

"Make as good time as you can," he said hurriedly; "the matter is important. You must catch to-night's express without fail. You are to wait the answer by telegram. It cannot come before three days at the soonest. When you have received it, give your beast full rein. Drive him like mad. I'll do as much for you some day."

Once the man was well under way with the letter Dillon felt a sense of relief mingled with horrible impatience. His decision was made. The rest did not depend upon him, but the hours dragged, and it seemed that the third day would never dawn.



During this time he and Murray studied Mr. Bradford's report, and when the business discussion was finished he confided to his friend how he had been carried away by the delicacy, refinement and charm of the lawyer's daughter.

"She is a true woman—a true young girl; not one of these blue-stockings nor a fashionable sport. She is like so much perfumed wax to which one might give the form one wished. Poor old man," he added; "this is all Greek for you. You find the conversation of a man in love incomprehensible. It seems as ridiculous to you as the mouthing tenor does to the deaf man."

Sydney shook his head.

"I'm not such an ignoramus as you think," he said. "I remember, when I was twenty, having seen on the Westfield race-course a young mare. Since then I've handled plenty of horses, but I've never seen anything deserving the name. Her owner wouldn't sell her. It seemed to me I should lose my mind. He took pity on me, and finally let me have her for double what she was worth. He robbed me, and I knew it. But you can't say I'm not capable of understanding your feelings. I've never regretted that money!"

"If the answer is 'Yes,'" Phillip had said to his friend, "then I shall leave you, my poor old man. How shall we arrange the business details?"

A good part of the three days' wait was spent



in calculating figures. Murray was sad at the thought of losing the friend with whom he had lived for years in such close intimacy, and yet, on the other hand, he so adored the ranch and the cattle and all that belonged to the property that he had a certain inward satisfaction in saying to himself:

"I shall no longer have to divide my darling with anybody."

He was almost as impatient as Dillon to know the decision of the young girl. On the fourth day he gave up his morning round in order to be surely at the ranch when the telegram arrived. At twelve o'clock the eagerly looked-for messenger arrived. Nobody heard his remarks about bad roads and late trains. Dillon seized the yellow envelope and ran with it into the house. Murray, his foot already in the stirrup, shouted to him:

"Quickly, for Heaven's sake! What does she say?"

But he realised presently that he would not get his answer in this way, so he followed his friend indoors. Dillon stood with the paper in his hand; there was only one word—one word printed coldly there before his eyes—one word was all he had asked for, to be sure.

Murray put no further questions; the happiness in Dillon's face was answer enough. He swung out of the room and on to his horse, murmuring to himself:



"The ranch is mine! My darling is mine! There's no accounting for tastes, but it seems to me I've got the best of the bargain."



CHAPTER III

THE HONEYMOON

"Do not pick up your bow until the instruments are all in tune."—BEETHOVEN.

AFTER the first six weeks of married life Dillon took his wife down to the Moorlands; the country place in Pennsylvania where he had chosen a home in which they were to settle at once. Madeleine had thus become a wife almost before she had been courted. She loved her husband devotedly, tenderly; but he sometimes found her, after a few hours' separation, with an expression he did not understand. She was thoughtful, listless, as though some shadow had passed between them. He believed that as soon as they were in their own house she would find occupations sufficient to divert her from the astonishment of this new life and the possible loneliness of being separated from her father. Dillon knew well what he wanted her to do and to be. He was ready to wait patiently until this delicate flower he had so brusquely uprooted took new hold in the earth to which he had transplanted it.

They had purchased an old house with simple furniture that had been in it since colonial days.

Dillon disliked the idea of a new establishment—a collection of belongings which, as he expressed it, "had no soul."

"Let us buy nothing," he said to his wife. "You have your Elliston things; I have a few belongings that have been slumbering for years in a storehouse down South—some silver that belonged to my mother, an old mahogany desk where I used to write my exercises when I was a child, and some dining-room chairs that will go perfectly with the Moorlands furniture. Suppose we send for them?"

"Let's telegraph," she said. "I'm so impatient to see the house settled."

Once unpacked, these few relics peopled the Moorlands house with memories which Dillon wanted his wife to share.

"It doesn't seem possible," he said, "that you never knew my mother. I adored her. I suppose all children when they are little have a passion for their mothers."

"I hardly remember mine," Madeleine responded affectionately, "but I can understand."

In her love for her husband she wanted to be even more than a wife—she wanted to be for Phillip what the lost mother had been. She coaxed from him, by her tender interest, all the stories of their life together before his father's ruin and death, which sent them homeless for protection to relatives in New England. Madeleine wished to be a stranger to nothing which was dear to Phillip.



The Moorlands house was a mile from the village, which itself came within the limits of the estate. There were several hundred acres in park and woodland, besides a farm, which employed a dozen men. Dillon's occupations were to be the direction of this property, and a share some day, he trusted, in the management of local affairs. His leisure was to be spent in writing and in the study of certain social questions.

The large front room facing the valley was a library richly stored with classic books that offset the contribution of modern publications which came in Dillon's cases from the ranch. There were volumes of every description, clearly bespeaking the episodes of Phillip's life: books on foreign lands, atlases, geographies, books on money and banking, the "Study of Sociology" by Herbert Spencer, the "Fattening of Cattle" by P. B. L. Greene, Mark Twain and Dickens worn into ribbons, a tear-stained copy of Tristram Shandy which opened of its own accord to the story of Le Fevre, the publications of the Psychical Research Society, one or two novels by the Duchess, Buckles's "History of Civilisation," and a quantity of pamphlets on the education of children, besides reports of philanthropic societies in America and England.

There was even a recipe book, of which Madeleine took possession.

"Did you ever see such a collection?" he asked her.



"I am going to study first this cook-book," she answered, delighted, "and find out the sort of food cowboys are used to."

Dillon felt himself the bit of a shipwreck that had floated and tossed for ages and was now become part of a safe-harboured vessel. The past year of struggle and restlessness faded at the dawn of happiness.

Of his ancestors he knew nothing beyond the conflicting faults and qualities which evidently he inherited from opposite origins. He had been early cast upon his own resources, with no preparation other than his own character. He had seen his father destroyed by financial ruin. When he was sixteen, earning his first money, his mother had died. Grief and solitude roused in him a spirit of revenge against fate; he determined to be no longer an instrument of chance, but take things in his own hands, to govern circumstances—to not be the mere fragment of a family shattered by misfortune, but to be himself an ancestor, the seed of a future family tree. Out of the chaos in which he had battered about, order must come through the force of his own will. He wished to form associations; he was stimulated by the stability which the Moorlands promised. He was no longer the individual troubled by his own incompleteness; he had become part of a group to whom, not in vain, he might confide his best. He was one of a family. He had a wife; he would have



children and grandchildren, and they would know the Moorlands, and his own effort would gain in significance as a contribution to the traditions which bind one generation to another.

By November, two months after their marriage, the house was settled and in running order. Madeleine, so long the mistress in her father's home, met domestic difficulties with the grace of experience. She engaged from New York, by correspondence, two newly arrived Swedes, who seemed to get on comfortably with Fanny, Madeleine's own maid, whose parents lived on a farm several miles from the village. There were frequent complications owing to the mixture of languages spoken in the house, but Phillip was rather glad than otherwise that his wife should find so near at hand occupations sufficient to keep her busy. There was, however, something which troubled him. Since marriage he had been almost her only companion, yet he had not, as he desired it, her entire confidence. There were times when she seemed less happy than he—times when she seemed rather to escape than to seek his demonstrations of tenderness; times, again, when she seemed to love him more ardently than he had dared to hope.

Already the October winds were bringing to the ground the autumn leaves; the rain had been falling for several days, and the first open fires had given the young lovers a sense of intimacy more complete than during the late summer days,



when they had really lived as much out-of-doors as in.

The water-supply was not sufficient at the Moorlands. An ingenious idea had occurred to Dillon for remedying this difficulty by the use as reservoirs of certain springs which he had found during his wanderings on horseback. The whole village would be benefited by his plan, and he had gone one October morning for an all-day expedition with an engineer to look over the ground preparatory to making an official report.

The hours had dragged for Madeleine. Dressed for dinner, she sat waiting for Phillip in the library. At every sound she got up from the fire and went to the window over the entrance door where he would arrive.

She loved him. After this short separation she watched for him as she had on the evening when he first came back from Cedar Creek to Elliston. The same emotion set her heart to beating fast. In a few minutes he would be there; she would have her arms about him; she would be satisfied in his embrace.

Gradually dusk left the room in firelight. She became uneasy. Something had happened—she was sure of it! Phillip had probably been thrown from his horse and would be brought home unconscious. The solitude grew unbearable: for company, she put Phillip's lamp on the centre-table and drew the curtains.



When she returned her husband was at her side. He had come in by the back door, and, being thoroughly wet, had gone directly to his room and changed his clothes before seeing his wife. He had done it out of consideration for her; his muddy boots and dripping clothes were not presentable in the house. But Madeleine, nervous after her long wait, was hurt. This was the Phillip for whom she had watched with such anxiety that she choked now as she thought of it. He had not even let her know when he came in! She had thought of him every minute all day, and he had stopped to change his clothes before seeing her.

He put both arms about her, not suspecting what was in her mind; thinking of his joy, he had hurried so—he had so much to tell her: he knew she would be so glad. The ride had exhilarated him, and he was penetrated with the delicious sense of returning to his home. He could have lifted her in his arms and carried her under his kisses. But she drew away from him.

"Dearest," he said, "darling, what is it? What have I done?"

"Nothing," was her answer—"nothing at all," and as she said it the tears suffocated her.

Phillip was distracted. His heart overflowing with love, his whole being bent toward the woman he adored counted, for nothing. He had been awkward; he had wounded her; he had not understood. She wept and he wooed her. The exploits



of the day, the success of the expedition, the importance of what he had obtained seemed insignificant. Tears were wearing an abyss between them. Fast and ardent came his words of tenderness and entreaty; only one thing made any difference: she had been hurt by what he had done; in her momentary pain she had forgotten even that he loved her; she did not take for granted his devotion; she agonised at the seeming indifference which had greeted the delicacy of her own attention.

"It's nothing," she protested, and Phillip knew he was gaining ground, for she let him stay by her side with one arm around her—"it's nothing." And through her tears, little by little, she confided her anxiety, her love, which Phillip hoped would some day be so deep that no tempest could thus disturb its surface.

It was something of a lesson to him. He began to understand how widely different from a man's is woman's nature. He realised that he must never come back to the same woman he had left.

The accumulation of events passed in common sympathy make the unalterable basis of a man's friendship for man. With woman he saw that the building-ground of love was reft with quicksands; those who had not patience or tact either fled or were engulfed. He proposed to himself another plan: if his wife were a dozen different women according to the temper of the moment, he would be a dozen different men; she need never be disap-



pointed in him, since he loved her. He would know every access; for the shifting sands he would wait, building as he could brick by brick, until his fortress was complete, until he had established himself within the walls of confidence and love. Nothing else counted for him while he thus studied her. His work, his projects for the people could wait; all the future depended upon the perfect intimacy of two souls who would act as one with a force that neither could alone acquire. It was not easy; there were moments when he struggled with impatience; but he argued to himself that nothing was small, no matter how insignificant, which threatened to cloud the brilliancy of their happiness.

And Madeleine, shy and furtive at first, had no food for morbid reflection. Her reserve, her habit of confiding in no one, her very infatuation for her husband, were the substances which would have nourished with poison the young wife had not Phillip taken possession of her moods. He was part of them. She could not torture herself over fictitious injuries, imaginary neglects, sensibilities misunderstood; into the deepest recesses of her nature Phillip carried the light of his tenderness. Gradually under his guidance she formed a character the complement to his, such as love alone could never have made it.



CHAPTER IV

Phillip's Ordeal

"I love him because he is yours."—Catherine Sforza.

It was one of Phillip's theories that a man should occupy himself with the welfare of those nearest to him. He sometimes quoted to Madeleine what St. Vincent de Paul had said: "If there is a poor man within a stone's throw of your house and you ignore it, you are culpable."

Madeleine liked the idea of going among the poor. In the old village there were the settlers who had been for several generations at the Moorlands, but on the outskirts of the small town there was a shifting population of Italians who worked on a branch railroad under construction. It was among these families that Madeleine felt she was most welcome. Their existence was unvaryingly simple. The only ceremonies which they celebrated were weddings, christenings and funerals, the various acts in the drama of life. On Sundays at service they worshipped the Creator, the Giver of Life.

Watching his wife, it seemed to Phillip that she was developing more through contact with the poor than by the reading she had done during the autumn.



"You know, Phillip," she said one evening when they had finished dinner and he was beginning some work, while she took her accustomed place in the sofa corner.

Dillon could tell by her tone that she wanted to talk to him, so he put aside his papers, lighted his pipe, and asked:

"What is it, dearest; what was it you wanted to tell me?"

"Nothing especial. It's something I've noticed in those Italian people at the Moorlands. They seem to love their children so."

And presently, in the voice which had attracted her husband, she began again:

"You know when I first went down there they were strange with me. They used to treat me like an outsider. They were not exactly critical, but I was always embarrassed. I thought I would never make friends with them."

She put her hand in Phillip's; her voice was very low:

"They did not know then that I was to be a mother, too."

"And now that they know, darling?" Phillip asked.

"Now they seem to love me. There is a bond between us."

He kissed her hands tenderly.

"I love to go among them," she said, and laughing: "They even put on a little air of superi-

ority with me. Most of them have had four or five children already."

But the exultation Madeleine described, the feeling that a new life was beating close to her own, the certainty that joys awaited her beyond any she had dreamed, were sometimes dimmed by anxiety and suffering.

"The honeymoon is over," she thought to herself; "our way lies among the realities of life." Yet their happiness was less often in jeopardy than during the early days. Now that they had come close to real things, fictitious misunderstandings vanished as the morning mists drawn from the recesses of the valley by the sun to make a bluer sky. The woof and warp of love and confidence Phillip had woven strong between them; such a foundation would bear whatever tapestried story life might trace upon it, and the threads, be they gay or sombre, would neither break nor become entangled.

Still the days went slowly. Phillip forgot that he had ever been otherwise than worried; to Madeleine it seemed that she had been always an invalid.

She did not want a hospital nurse to take care of her.

"They are all unmarried," she protested. "I would rather have one of the women from the Moorlands who has had lots of children."

Phillip, however, plead for the admirably trained women whose devotion and skill had touched him during his mother's last illness. "I should not,"



he explained, "have a trained nurse live in the house, as some people do, any more than I would take medicine when I didn't need it. But in sickness you will find them, as I have, a benediction."

So a double infirmary was established. The prim English hospital graduate, in her white apron and cap, her blue gingham dress, was installed in a hall room, and with the morning sun came the Italian mother, a bright scarf tied over her braids of hair, her broad hips swaying like a cradle under the ample folds of her scarlet petticoats.

At last one morning the cry came which riveted Phillip to humanity. His son was a living creature; his wife was a mother.

These two thoughts dominated the confusion that followed in his mind with relief from anxiety. He no longer envied the nurse and doctor the multiple tasks that kept them busy: he had not been able to take Madeleine's suffering, that had crucified him, but now joy belonged to them both.

She was like a shrine to Phillip; he approached her with awe; some sacred light played about her eyes. She was glorified by momentary contact with that other world whence she had brought the miracle of life by her side. She lay like a spirit, her forces diminished, her soul augmented by this perfect gift that had come through her from God. She carried love from Phillip's eyes like a benediction upon the child. One white hand moved toward her husband, the other covered her new possession; she loved



him more because she had suffered by him. She watched him with the adoration of sacrifice. She was a mother—she was motherhood.

"He is ours, beloved," Phillip whispered.

A whimsical look traversed her features. It was so delicious to have respite, to know that the worst hours were already in the past, to be listless and tenderly provided for.

"Yes," she said, "he is ours; and I think, Phillip, that he looks like you."



CHAPTER V

The Anniversary

"Toutes les choses de ce monde sont reverberées: la lune dans le miroir des temps, l'amour dans le souvenir."

—Hugues Le Roux.

It was the anniversary of Madeleine's wedding day.

She opened her eyes that morning somewhat later than usual; she loved the slow return from slumber-land when the ideas are vague and undefined. Those whose lot is bitter feel at this particular moment all the anguish of life; during the brief interval of unconsciousness their burdens slip from them, only to be resumed again with the dawn.

To Madeleine the bitter side of existence was unknown; in her heart the sun shone warm and brilliant as through the half-drawn curtains.

Phillip, up since dawn, as in the old ranch days, had been out for a long ride on horseback. His morning round was about finished. Madeleine knew she could expect him back for breakfast with a trooper's appetite, his face fairly glowing in health and pleasure as he recounted a dozen different anecdotes about the farm-hands and the Moorlands country people.

Before the reunion at breakfast, however, there was a ceremony which took place regularly in Madeleine's room, always at the same time and with the same details, though its charm was unflagging. First, in the house and park all was silent. Then suddenly Madeleine, still drowsy, heard pattering footsteps overhead. Then silence again, long enough for tiny legs to totter down a flight of stairs. Next a whispered conversation outside the bedroom door, then a soft mysterious knocking, a gentle tapping which roused the mother with a smile. Her tone was always the same one of astonishment as she answered:

"Who is it? Come in!"

And as the trio entered her heart leaped with joy. First came the Irish nurse carrying in her arms the second child, and leading, half hidden in the folds of her skirt, the first-born, the young master of the household, the heir, whom Phillip pompously dubbed "my son."

On this particular morning the tapping went on indefinitely. In vain Madeleine called "Come in! Come in, children!" On went the rapping, steadily, and no one entered.

"They are making such noise themselves," she cried, "the rogues don't hear me!"

Laughing, she got up, slipped into a pink dressing-gown, as delicate a pink as the rose colour in her own cheeks. The thin silk clung to the round lines of her figure, full in the flower of its womanhood.



She ran to the door, threw it open, and drawing back she clasped her hands delightedly.

"How perfectly lovely! What does it mean?"

It was not the Irish nurse, but Phillip himself who accompanied the children. Awkward and loving, he held the baby tight against him, while little Edward advanced proudly alone, carrying a bunch of roses much bigger than himself. With arms outstretched to meet him Madeleine joyously exclaimed:

"What a beautiful surprise! What does it mean?"

"Can't you guess?" was Phillip's answer.

"Yes, darling," tenderly. "I know. It is our fifth anniversary."

"And," he echoed, "there are four of us to celebrate it."

Together they sat down on the sofa, Madeleine next to Phillip, the children on both their knees. Opposite to them was the long cheval glass; reflected in the mirror, Madeleine watched the group they made. How close they were! How united!

"Phillip, darling," she said, "you brought me roses for my wedding day. Look what a picture I have to offer you in return. It is called 'The happy family.' Look! In front of you!"

There on the smooth surface he also saw those whom he loved best in the world reflected close in his embrace. Turning to his wife, he said:

"See what happiness you have brought me!"



She shook her head gently.

"No, Phillip, it is you who have made us all happy."

Breakfast was as gay as possible. For the first time little Kate came to the table in her high chair. Her parents could not conceal their inward rapture at her perfect behaviour. Phillip's eyes travelled from children to mother, enveloping them all in tenderness.

The maid presently interrupted with a message which caused Phillip a moment's annoyance.

"My father is here, sir," she said. "He's walked over from the farm and wants to know if he can speak to you."

"Couldn't he come some other day?" Madeleine asked. "It seems to me they are always running after you—always taking you away from me."

"Poor Mills is very anxious about something I can perhaps help him to arrange."

Madeleine smiled, and in her eyes there was an expression which illumined Phillip's.

"What I really mean," she said, "is that I am as proud as I can be when I see how these people depend upon you! You have won their hearts as you did mine. You always know the right thing to do—you are so fair, so kind. Phillip, I adore you!"

The same day Madeleine received a letter from her father. He also had remembered the anniversary—the sad, the happy day which had a second



time taken the soul from his house. As Madeleine read her father's affectionate message she could see his face, the peculiar smile which, far more than any outburst of gaiety, was an expression of courtesy and charming consideration for others. Now only she seemed to understand that smile.

Mr. Bradford had reopened his letter to add a postscript, which read as follows:

"Just as I sealed my letter, who should come in to see me but your old school-mate, Gertrude Ballestier, now Mrs. Wallace. She has developed into the typical modern woman, very much in the swim. She belongs to no end of clubs in New York: I forget the names of them all. She has been sent to Elliston to study the condition of the working people and report on it to a committee of women. She inquired most eagerly for you, as you can imagine—in fact, she plied me with questions as to what is being done in the way of people's clubs, night schools, girls' friendlies, etc., at the Moorlands. I told her that you and Phillip were very much interested in the poor of your vicinity.

"'But,' she insisted, 'do they really go about it scientifically?'

"I assured her that you would be delighted to see her, and that she had better go and have a look for herself, so any day she may drop down upon you. I think you and Phillip will enjoy talking with her. She is intelligent, a good talker, a poor listener—at least, she paid little attention to my remarks; but I am old-fashioned, and she is the true 'new woman.'"

In a short note by the same mail Mrs. Wallace asked Madeleine's hospitality for a few days in October. Phillip would not care much for her, Madeleine thought to herself, but she was surprised that evening, when she gave the letter to her husband to read, that he should take the matter so gaily.

"When does Mrs. Wallace arrive?" he asked, laughing. "We must of course put her up for a week. It will be amusing to hear her theories on the subject of scientific charity. It begins to look as though we should have to apply something of the kind to our Moorlands poor. The golden age is finished for this neighbourhood. Mills brought me sad news to-day. Ever since I discovered those springs on the mountain things have been going from bad to worse. They have pierced an artesian well, as you know, and they've got water enough to make all the mill-wheels turn and all of their heads turn into the bargain.

"You remember our despair when they put the first factory up on the meadow creek; well, there are to be two more—much larger. A company has already purchased the land and turned out several of the Norwood farmers, who could not resist the prices they offered. It will be no time before, in this whole region, we shall see industry supplanting agriculture, and just as surely have on our hands paupers, abandoned children, cast-off grandparents, workmen crippled by machinery,



and women who give up their household duties and flock to the factories to compete with men. Mrs. Wallace's visit," he went on, "is most opportune. We shall soon need the sort of hospitals she proposes for the moral and physical wrecks made by the advance of progress."

He spoke with a touch of bitterness. Madeleine, eager to calm him, protested.

"At least, you can be sure of one thing—your wife won't go into the factory and your children will be always well cared for. All the progress in the world, commercial or scientific, can't disturb our happiness!"

"Darling," he answered, putting both arms around her. Gently she leaned her head against his shoulder, as though she needed this support to be at peace.

"Do you know," she said, "this is the time of day I love the best. Of course I adore it when the children come in every morning to wake me, and I wouldn't give up for anything the hours I spend with them, washing and dressing my babies. I like it, too, when you are sitting opposite me and the servants are so eager to serve you properly. I am perhaps most proud of you when there are a lot of people who listen admiringly to what you say; but my favourite time is now, when the children are safe in bed, when I have seen them fast asleep, and I know that no one will come to disturb us with a message or to get an order—when you belong

to me, only to me, as you did after we were first married."

They were standing together on the balcony which ran around the old colonial house. Over the black trees of Moorlands Park the moon was rising. It was a soft September night, the mysterious hour when those who love, who hope and who remember are stirred more profoundly than by any poet's verses or the strains of any music.

Close to his heart the man held his wife.

"Beloved," he said, "those words you have just spoken I take as my anniversary gift—my present from you on our fifth wedding-day. In years to come, if God so wills it, as I firmly pray He may, I will recall these same dear words to you. My hair will have grown white, the day's work will weigh more heavily than it does now upon my shoulders, but your heart and mine will feel the same joy, the same emotion then as now, when they beat in unison, one against the other."



CHAPTER VI

Where Is Progress?

"The best prophet of the future is the past."—Byron.

Such peace could hardly last.

Together with the letter from Mrs. Wallace announcing her visit in the near future, Dillon had messages of a most disturbing nature from his old comrade, Sydney Murray, at the Cedar Creek ranch. The lawsuit which had been pending for five years was shortly to be tried. The outcome, whether victory or defeat, would mean continued security or ruin for Phillip and his family. He and Murray had negotiated together all the early transactions concerning the ranch. The deeds and grants were in Murray's hands at present, but Dillon was the only man who could testify as to boundaries and conditions at the moment of purchase. Long before he confessed it to Madeleine he admitted to himself that honour toward his friend necessitated his return to Cedar Creek, for a time at least, in the early winter. He was not inwardly opposed to the idea of resuming temporarily the wild, open-air life, the old routine with Murray and the boys; but he was disturbed at leaving his household. He

might be absent only two months; it was probable that he should be gone four.

He was determined not to leave Madeleine and the children alone at the Moorlands. The very presence in the neighbourhood of a factory had somewhat changed the character of their habitation. It would be unwise and forlorn for his wife to remain during the long winter evenings without society of any kind.

What should he decide regarding her?

She might go back to Elliston, it was true, but Phillip had in mind another plan which seemed to crystallise as he read Mrs. Wallace's letter. She referred to the group of girls with whom Madeleine had been educated at boarding-school, and who had most of them settled in the city. Their interests were widely different from those of the Moorlands; they were in touch with the movement and activity which constitute progress. After five years of purely family life, it might be an excellent thing, Phillip thought, for Madeleine to go, while they could afford it and the children were young, for a winter in town, to get in touch with old friends and new ideas, to compare her tranquil existence with the agitation of town occupations.

They had spent only a part of their income each year since their marriage, so that from the surplus of their economies Dillon felt justified in drawing for the extra funds which such an enterprise would demand. Madeleine must have new dresses; there



would be the house-rent, the expense of moving, and the incidentals which any change involves.

When the practical details had been thought out Phillip proposed the scheme to his wife. Madeleine's first pang at the idea of a separation from her husband made it difficult for her to think of the plan in a reasonable way. They talked it well over, and, seeing the double necessity in which Dillon was placed to render a service to his friend and to protect their own interests, she became reconciled, trying to reassure herself with the thought that it would not be for very long. She was not displeased at going to New York for the winter, and her satisfaction took rather a feminine form. She had been dreading Mrs. Wallace's visit somewhat as one might dread the visit of the travelling peddler when one had nothing to spend. Now, however, that she was to enter into the city market, she was glad to see as many samples as possible.

Relieved that a solution had been found so readily, Dillon wrote Murray to expect him by November 1st, and to count on him for as long as necessary to push affairs through in proper shape.

Phillip was determined to go himself to the train for Mrs. Wallace. He wished to get her first impressions regarding the Moorlands, and to talk with her as he drove her up from the station, which was some miles distant. When they arrived at the house Madeleine's children were having supper.

Mrs. Wallace was dressed in a neat cloth tailor-made dress; her skirt was very short, and at her side hung a round leather bag ornamented with a silver clasp.

"She is just the same as in school days," Madeleine thought to herself as she greeted her; "but how anxious she must have been, to get those deep wrinkles in her brow."

Mrs. Wallace had brought with her her son Ballestier, a boy of seven. He had a large forehead which overhung his prominent eyes. His hair was cut short, his thin neck rose out of a turn-over collar, and his fleshless legs were in contradiction to his almost portly figure.

When Madeleine kissed him he looked surprised.

"The governess," Mrs. Wallace explained, "was taken ill just as I was starting. It meant bringing the boy with me or giving up the trip, disappointing the health inspection committee, and not seeing you! I didn't think you'd mind having Ballestier, and I knew the country air would do him good. The doctors find they must operate soon on his throat, and he needs all the toning up he can get."

Madeleine was helping the child off with his coat. She felt under her touch the wiry frame of the boy, who had not yet spoken.

"I think we'll leave his coat on," said Mrs. Wallace, "until he gets accustomed to the warmth inside. It was rather chilly for him driving up from the station."



"Would he like to see the children," asked Madeleine, "or would you rather go to your room first?"

"I think it would be very nice for him to see the children," was Mrs. Wallace's response, as she took him by the hand and they started toward the nursery. "He very seldom plays with other boys. He gets so overheated and so excited that it invariably ends in his taking a cold."

The Dillon offspring were seated on either side of a low table, each in front of a large bowl of bread and milk. Their fat hands guided the spoons to their hungry mouths; their rosy cheeks were milk-flecked, and white streams trickled down their oilcloth aprons.

"How old are they?" Mrs. Wallace asked.

"The boy is four; Kate is two and a half."

"And what do you feed them on?"

"That's just plain bread and milk they're eating now."

"The milk is sterilised, of course?"

"No. It's brought down every evening from the farm."

Ballestier had drawn near the table. He watched the children as a lap-dog watches the cur who is feeding out of an ash-barrel, and the evident relish of the young children for their food gave him an appetite.

"Mother"—he spoke twice before attracting his mother, who was talking with Mrs. Dillon—

"mother, can't I have some bread and milk? Can't I? I'm so hungry!"

"Certainly not!" was the answer.

"There's plenty," Madeleine protested; "and the children would love to have him eat with them."

"He wouldn't close his eyes to-night. He's never had a drop of pure milk in his life."

She was frankly shocked to find Madeleine so ignorant about questions of hygiene.

Little Ballestier could not take his gaze from the dining couple. Both hands on his knees, he leaned forward toward them. As the girl carried the spoon to her mouth he gave a quick glance to see if his mother were looking. He kissed the puddle of milk in the baby's dimples and ran his tongue along his own lips. At that moment Mrs. Wallace remembered that he still had on his coat.

"There's no use taking it off now," she said to him. "We are going to our room, and you will need it in the hall; but don't let me forget it again."

Dillon was to take Mrs. Wallace the following day on a tour over the property and to visit the Norwood Mills. The trap was ready at nine, but Mrs. Wallace begged to walk.

"I never get less than four or five miles exercise a day—twice around the golf-links at least," she explained, "and I shall be quite miserable without my constitutional."

Phillip smiled and made no answer.

It was agreed that the carriage should meet them



later at the factory and that the morning should be spent on foot.

They climbed the hills back of the Moorlands where Phillip had found the springs five years before. The consequences of his discovery had been far-reaching. They had brought about certain changes in the place which gave him cause for anxiety. With sincerity in his tone he said:

"I knew that there was a hidden force in these waters. My dream was to capture it—to make use of it so that others who worked might be benefited besides myself. I succeeded. I put this water-power at their command, but they were not emancipated by it; they were made more than ever slaves. It is they who serve it, not the water-force which serves them. Ever since this purely agricultural settlement has begun to develop industrial interests the character of the Moorlands has completely altered."

As Phillip talked he looked at his companion. She had taken a pair of eyeglasses from her side bag and was putting them on. She wrinkled her forehead and answered Phillip's last remark with:

"Change is progress, Mr. Dillon."

"Put it the other way," he responded. "Are you sure that what you call progress is not merely another name for change? Man, after all, like a gambler, always has before him the same number of cards, good, bad or indifferent. He may try various combinations; he may shuffle the pack as

he pleases. The counters change hands, one loses, another wins, but since the world began there has been little variety in the tribute paid by humanity to suffering, to death, to love."

Mrs. Wallace's expression was severe.

"You have read and studied and travelled, I know," she said, "and so have I, but we look at life through very different glasses."

"I confess," Phillip responded, "that I look at life through my eyes."

"Exactly!" Her tone was triumphant. "Some people make use of telescopes, others of microscopes. Rest assured that they see more than you or I. It is, thanks to their invention, that we are beginning to know something at least about the laws of nature and how to apply them to our daily life. We have for so many centuries mixed up the ideal with the real, the so-called spiritual with the material, superstitions and ignorance with certainties and facts, that we are only at the outset of a new era."

"What is it to be, this new era?"

"It is to be an age of science purely. We began with the prophets and their speculations about the unseen, the invisible God, the soul; then came the metaphysicians, always treating of the intangible, the action of the mind upon the outside world; now, at last, we have come to the scientists, who admit only what they can see and touch, who propose to know the relation of things to each



other, of things to the human being, who is only a thing himself, a combination of atoms, different from other combinations, but responding to identical physical laws. The work of the scientists is to discover these laws. When they have succeeded——"

"But how can they succeed?" Phillip interrupted.

"How can they?"

"Yes."

"I don't understand your question. How can they fail?"

"It makes little matter what end you begin at," the young man explained. "The prophets and metaphysicians argued from the unknown and tried to prove something. The scientists take what they can prove as a starting-point, but they are bound to come up against the mystery, the unanswerable mystery, the gift—I mean life, Mrs. Wallace. Where does it come from? What is it? Has any bacteriologist been able to reproduce it in his laboratory?"

"Not yet, not yet," she reiterated nervously; "but——"

"But what?" Phillip asked, a trifle irritated.

"But give them time! You surely have followed the experiments of Doctor Loeb in Chicago?"

A pale lunar moth flew out from under the cedar trees and beat against Mrs. Wallace's gown as it swept across the road. Dazed by the light, its

heavy velvet wings fluttered a moment. The young woman struck it instinctively with the stick she carried, as though to defend herself. It fell to the earth.

"What a splendid specimen!" she cried, picking up the moth. "I am so sorry my boy did not see it. I can carry it home, though; it will be just the same."

"No," said Phillip, "it will not be the same. A moment ago it was living; now it is dead. A change has taken place here before our eyes which no human will can accomplish."

And after a silence he added:

"Science, Mrs. Wallace, is not progress. It is only a new form of ignorance."

"I have not had my last word yet," Mrs. Wallace laughed, taking off her glasses and putting them back in her side bag.

They had come down on the main road, where the carriage waited to take them to the factory.

"We can resume our conversation after dinner. Madeleine will have a word to say, I imagine, on the subject. I shall be relieved to know that she doesn't share your prejudice about science."

Again Phillip studied his companion stealthily.

"She looks only half a woman," he thought. "Her science is only half scientific; her logic is only half logical. Thank heaven that Madeleine is so truly a woman, since her husband is so truly a man."



CHAPTER VII

The Factory Versus the Home

"When the woman leaves the home the hearth grows cold."—Jules Simon.

Phillip and Mrs. Wallace drove back from the factory in silence. It was evident to them both, as they made their morning rounds, that they looked at things with very different eyes. Mrs. Wallace watched and studied her companion, inwardly noting her observations.

"He is an easy-going, healthy animal. On first sight one would think him above the average, because he can talk about something besides business and he doesn't get his arguments all mixed up as soon as a woman speaks to him. This is only an exterior appearance, however. As soon as one goes beneath the surface one finds a man just like other men—that is, a being totally devoid of imagination, untouched by the great problems of life. He lives in comfortable enjoyment of the present moment, and knows nothing of the anxiety with which the superior modern woman faces the questions of the future. It is this which makes such a great breach between the sexes: the man lives in the present, the woman tries to conform the future to her ideas of progress."

Dillon also was making mental comments. He bore Mrs. Wallace no ill will for the philosophy she expounded; on the contrary, to the slight expression of contempt on her face he responded with a smile free from malice. He was, perhaps, congratulating himself that Madeleine was not of the same school as her friend.

They had no sooner crossed the threshold of the Moorlands than Phillip felt that something unusual had happened. He could tell it by the way the maid Fanny whirled past them in the vestibule like a gust of wind, instead of coming to help Mrs. Wallace off with her hat and coat. He was surprised, also, on going up to the library for a glance at his mail before lunch, to find Madeleine still in her dressing-gown, in spite of the hour.

"Do you realise how late it is, dear?" he asked her. "Lunch will be ready in half an hour."

"I know," said Madeleine, "but I have been awfully upset this morning."

"Nothing has happened to the children?"

"No. I have had a scene with Fanny."

"Was she impertinent?"

"No. She is going to leave us."

"Fanny? Really? At once?"

"At the end of the month."

Phillip looked as troubled as his wife. This maid had come to Madeleine knowing nothing. She had been attracted by the house whose multiple lights shone out at night across the valley; the



luxurious home where there were pictures, rugs, hangings, a piano, and every comfort. In a very short time she had become a skilful maid, and Madeleine treated her kindly, as she did all of her servants, with a touch of friendliness. As Dillon expressed it: "When you live alone you feel almost familiarly toward those who serve you." Madeleine often repeated, as though she were proud of it:

"Fanny is very devoted to me."

So Phillip was sure that his wife had been disappointed in her. But much more serious than any personal sentiment of regret was the question of replacing her. The city maids were seldom willing to live all the year round in the country, and Dillon did not know another girl at the Moorlands or Norwood who would "work out."

"What reason," he asked, "did Fanny give you for leaving? She doesn't want a raise in her wages, does she?"

"She said nothing about money or about anything, in fact," Madeleine answered. "All she said was, 'I am going because I want to go. I guess I have a right to, haven't I?'"

"Don't you suppose," said Phillip, with a sudden inspiration, "that she is expecting to be married? Last Sunday, when I went past the servants' sitting-room, the door was open, and I saw two young fellows talking to Fanny. Perhaps one of them is a favoured suitor."

Madeleine shook her head emphatically.

"It can't be possible. Fanny wouldn't leave us to get married. She is too happy here."

"But, darling, you were very happy in your father's home, and yet you left it to come into mine."

She smiled lovingly and said:

"Yes; but there is only one Phillip in the world. I could not resist you, you were so persuasive."

"I am going to try my eloquence on Fanny and see if I can't change her decision."

He rang and the servant came in. There was an unpleasant expression on her pretty face—that rigid expression behind which the uneducated classes conceal their true intentions.

"Why do you leave us," Dillon asked, "as brusquely as though we had treated you like an enemy? At least give us some good reason. Are you going to be married? I could, perhaps, find something for your husband to do in the house here if he is a good sort of man."

Fanny looked at her employers with a shade of sarcasm. She seemed to say: "I? Marry? No. That does all very well for you."

Slowly, as though she were recording with satisfaction the effect of her words, she announced:

"I'm going to work at the factory."

"At the factory?" said Phillip, and he looked at her.

Her cheeks bore the freshness of a childhood spent in the open air—of her present healthy, comfortable life; she had the refined appearance of a



woman who has been only occupied with easy tasks fitted to her strength. Dillon remembered seeing her on her way to church the Sunday before; she had had on an old dress of Madeleine's and a hat she had trimmed over herself. "Really," he had said to Madeleine, "the farmers' daughters in this part of the country are veritable young ladies."

At present, however, he was picturing to himself what Fanny would become once she had fallen into the mechanical clutches of the mill, which would stop short not only all physical development, but which would dwarf and cripple her mind as well as her body. His pity for her included others like her. He thought of all the Fannys whom the murmur of the machinery lures from their parental homes, swallowing up their youth, their individuality, their hope of maternity, and the chances they represent of fecundity for the race.

"Fanny," he asked, a certain sadness in his tone, "why do you want to go to the mill?"

He spoke in so kindly a way that Fanny softened. Abandoning the defiant air she had at first assumed, she answered resolutely:

"I want to be independent."

"But do you suppose," Madeleine quickly interrupted, "that you won't find as many restrictions at the factory as you do here? You will have to obey the strictest sort of regulations, and you will be fined if you break the rules."

Coldly Fanny answered:

"At the mill the regulations are the same for everybody. You can see them posted up on the wall. Once you've read 'em, if you disobey that's your own affair, and you can pay the penalty."

"I never knew," said Madeleine sarcastically, "that the rules were so strict in my house nor that we had infringed upon your liberty."

But Fanny did not look at her. It was to her master that she chose to address herself.

"It's not only because I want my independence—you can have more fun at the factory."

"Are you sure of that, Fanny?"

"Indeed I am! When you work you always see the same people day after day; you've got to talk to the same people. At the mill there's a whole crowd of boys and girls together. They're coming and going; you're meeting new faces; there's change and excitement all the time."

"And do you think that the object of life is amusement?" Dillon asked.

"While you're young I do," she responded with assurance.

Again the man felt in his heart a movement of pity for her. He wondered whether those who had taught her to read and write when she was a child, and the ministers who had preached to her generation on Sundays, were not, in a measure, responsible for the ignorance, the moral ignorance, in which she had grown up. This young girl who would some day be the companion of a husband, the



mother of a family, and who, blissfully unconscious of the duties that awaited her, of what she owed to those about her, was convinced that the object of life, at least in youth, was amusement.

In her present state of mind it would have been worse than useless to have spoken to Fanny regarding such things as the duty of a girl toward her parents, toward the paternal household, and toward the home where she would some day be installed beside a husband. Dillon realised he could hold her attention only by speaking of her own immediate interests.

"Fanny," he said, " have you ever looked at the faces of the factory girls whom you are envying? After they have been at work a while they lose their colour, their complexions fade, their expression changes. You must remember that the factories have only been running a short time at the Moorlands, but in other cities where I have been I have seen the men and the women who have abandoned their open-air life, their professions, their household duties, and who for years have given themselves over to the service of a machine. It is not only their gaiety they lose in this transaction, but their health, their courage, their very hold on life itself."

Fanny was no longer listening to him. She said simply:

"Thank you very much for thinking of my health. It's pretty good, I guess. I'll always keep

a pleasant memory of the time I've spent in your home, but I can't say I think you're right about the mills; and I'm going to have my own way in this matter. I guess I've a right. I'm a free-born American girl. There ain't anybody that can make me change my mind."

Phillip did not further discuss the matter, and the following week Fanny began work at the factory.

Mrs. Wallace returned late in the afternoon, having visited the village school and the mill-hand houses. She was full of what she had seen. During dinner she talked of nothing else, and the conversation was continued upon the same subjects late into the night.

"You can't imagine," she said, "the barbarous condition in which those new hands live—those who are working on the railroad. They are like animals! Especially the Italians."

"Oh, I'm so fond of them," said Madeleine.

Mrs. Wallace looked at her, amazed. Madeleine was half lying on the sofa, her hand resting on the arm of her husband's chair, which he had placed close by her side. Mrs. Wallace's lips curled slightly.

Evidently she was thinking, "This poor woman is entirely under the domination of this man. It never occurs to her to criticise the false ideas he brings her; she absorbs them like a sponge. Fortunately, she is to spend next winter in New York.



When she has heard one of the club discussions her eyes will be opened."

It depressed Mrs. Wallace to see how soon certain women become like wax in the hands of the men they love. Inwardly she congratulated herself at not belonging to this category of weaklings, and she determined to overcome the slight disgust which such absolute submission inspired in her, and to try and emancipate her old schoolmate.

"These women to whom you are so devoted at the Moorlands," she said to Madeleine, "are destitute of all common sense. You know as well as I do what swarms of children they have?"

"You don't blame them for that, do you?" asked Dillon. "They set a very good example to our American women."

"I make no comments," Mrs. Wallace responded. "I am simply stating facts. These women have quantities of children, which certainly does not help them to make their fortunes. What I can't understand is why they left their own country—they say Italy is so beautiful. Did you ever think to ask them that, Madeleine?"

Smiling, Madeleine answered:

"They have come here to make money."

"Exactly!" Mrs. Wallace exclaimed, and both hands emphasised her words in a brusque upward gesture. "They have come here to make money—as big a sum as they can and as quickly as possible, so that they may return to their native land. But

do they take the best measures for accomplishing their purpose? They are strong and vigorous, most of them. They could earn almost as much as a man in the mills, and they spend their entire time cooking, hanging over the kitchen stove, looking after their children, taking them out to walk as though they were nurses in a millionaire's family, knitting stockings, and fancying that they are working hard because they keep their needles flying, and carry a pail of water on their heads at the same time."

Mrs. Wallace's outburst was so violent that Madeleine and her husband could not help laughing.

"Well," Phillip asked, "what did you advise them to do, these time-wasters?"

Like any reformer thoroughly sure of her convictions, Mrs. Wallace was glad of this chance to air her views. She began:

"This is exactly what I said to them. Do you think, I asked, that you are living in a progressive country? Yes or no? Yes, of course. Well, then, give up your old prejudices; do as others do around you. You spend half your time making soup. Can you imagine an energetic American woman standing like a sorcerer for hours every day over a soup-kettle? Intelligent people no longer eat soup, anyway; there is very little nourishment in it, and it dilates the stomach. If you feel, however, that you can't get along without it, you can buy canned soup at a most reasonable price, just as you can find machine-made stockings so cheap that it in



no way pays to twirl knitting-needles in your fingers all day."

"I am curious to know," said Dillon, "what they answered."

"Nothing could be more stupid. They said: 'While we are stirring soup and knitting we are watching our children and taking care of the house.' I simply laughed at them!"

Madeleine lifted her eyes with a kindly expression and asked her friend:

"Why did you laugh at them, Gertrude? Aren't they doing just what you are doing yourself? Aren't you constantly watching Ballestier to see what he does, what he eats, and how he is dressed?"

Mrs. Wallace did not see the point of this comparison, which rather offended her. She was, however, amused at Madeleine's ingenuousness.

"My dear," she exclaimed, "I have Ballestier with me constantly because I can look after him reasonably and scientifically. The women we are talking about take care of their babies like so many she-bears, licking the coats of their young to make them smooth. They haven't the vaguest notion of hygiene; they've probably never even heard the word. The reason that women like myself advise them to work in the factories is not only that they can increase the family budget with their earnings, but above all that their children can be rescued from the deplorable surroundings in which they are

growing up and be given the benefit of some modern scientific system of education."

"That is what you have really come here for, I suppose," said Madeleine, "to start——"

"Day-nurseries——"

Dillon interrupted:

"And the mothers you wish to send to——"

"The factory."

He repeated after her:

"Of course—the factory."

And there he let the conversation drop.

Madeleine knew what was in his thoughts. When Mrs. Wallace had gone, evidently satisfied with the seed she had sown on virgin soil, Madeleine said to her husband:

"Phillip, my darling, why do you look so troubled?"

Taking her hands in his, he gazed deep into her eyes.

"Do you remember," he asked, "what you said the other day when you caught sight of yourself and the babies and me all reflected in the mirror?"

"Yes; of course I remember. I said 'I present you with a picture called "the happy family." It is your own. You have made it, and I gave it to you for our anniversary.'"

He smiled.

"Are you sure, Madeleine, that the true happiness of life lies in this union of the wife, the husband and the children?"



"I believe it as I believe in God," she answered gravely.

"Then don't wonder that my heart is heavy when I see them planning for day-nurseries which will separate the babies from their mothers, and factories that will take the young girls and the women away from their homes."

"It is not of the factory people that I am thinking," she answered, "but of your own wife and your own children, who are so soon to be separated from you, Phillip, darling."



PART II





CHAPTER VIII

The Lunch Club

"I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."—I Timothy, i, 2.

Fortunately some friends of Mrs. Wallace's were away, so that Madeleine could rent for the winter their house in Sixtieth Street. The details as to rent, servants and the rest Mrs. Wallace took gladly in hand; everything was arranged before the arrival of Madeleine, her two children and the Irish nurse.

It seemed strange and miserable without Phillip. He had already been gone a fortnight, and though his letters were cheerful, he could of course say nothing as to when he might return. Her husband's messages were Madeleine's calendar; his letters came by the night mail; she kept the closely written pages under her pillow while she slept, and in the morning tucked them away in her dress.

"Darling Phillip," she often murmured to herself. "I must try to do something interesting while he is gone, so that he won't think my time has been wasted."



In the group to which Mrs. Wallace proposed presenting her there were only two names which she recognised: Martha Sheffield, who had been in her class at school, and Alida Penfold, who had been in a more advanced class and had left school to marry Clyde Penfold, an artist now settled in New York. The other women Mrs. Wallace wanted her to meet at a lunch club of which she had made Mrs. Dillon an honorary member.

"Of course," Mrs. Wallace explained, "if you lived in New York I couldn't do this for love or money; there's a waiting-list of twenty; but as you're an outsider, we can slip you in without creating too much jealousy."

The club met once a fortnight at the house of a member. During lunch some book which every one had studied for the occasion was discussed, and a subject was chosen for the next debate. The work which had been selected for the meeting at which Madeleine was to make her *debut* in New York society was entitled "The Coming Woman." It was by an unmarried college graduate who had given several lectures in New York.

Madeleine had insufficient time to read more than the first chapter. The ideas were new to her. She found them, in their strangeness to her opinions, difficult to grasp, and begged Mrs. Wallace to let her be only a listener.

"You can listen the first time," Mrs. Wallace answered, taking the matter very seriously, "but

hereafter you must participate in the discussion. It is one of the regulations of the club."

Martha Sheffield was to stop for Madeleine on her way to Alida Penfold's house, the place of reunion. She had asked to see Madeleine's children, so the three were waiting in the parlour window when Miss Sheffield arrived. In her gray furs and gray gown she looked demure to the casual observer. Her blonde hair and pale blue eyes were the cold signet of puritanism, but her brow and mouth were ardent. She was born of an old family who had left her everything but money. Her small house in Stuyvesant Square had a distinction which the ladies in more magnificent mansions were astonished to find they could not buy.

Her personality was not simply the character one forms in a lifetime by contact with actualities; it was the perfume from a rose-jar into which for generations the flowers' petals have fallen and mellowed. In her manner there was the carelessness of those who are sure of their instincts; the ease that has been acquired and handed down by ancestors who knew how to live. For this reason she presented a contrast to many of the women about her, who affected mannerisms lest their lack of breeding betray them, and who, on the other hand, could not conceal their intellectual arrogance, making as much of a splurge with their newly acquired knowledge as the *nouveau riche* does with his money.



Martha Sheffield was to the reunions she honoured with her presence what a coat of arms is to the carriage-door, a crest to letter-paper.

At once the Dillon children were drawn to her. The boy investigated the trinkets hanging on her chain, and Kate caressed her muff, gazing meanwhile at Miss Sheffield as though there were a magnetic current between the gray fur, the baby's soft fingers and the lady's pale blue eyes.

"What darlings they are!" she exclaimed. "You must let me see them often."

Madeleine was somewhat nervous about her first outing: her dress, she felt sure, was too simple; there was no time to change now. She had not thought to ask Mrs. Wallace what the women wore at lunch clubs, and her tailor gown, she saw, was in forlorn contrast to Miss Sheffield's get-up, which from the top of her thin patent-leather shoe to her freshly waved hair was luxurious perfection.

"Don't bother about my clothes," she said, divining Madeleine's thoughts. "I always dress, but you will find Mrs. Lemon and Mary Evans in short skirts and thick boots—sort of Valkyries. Their strength seems to lie in the masculinity of what they wear!"

It was as she had predicted.

Mary Evans, tall, thin, angular; Mrs. Lemon, short and fat, were both in the sexless garments Martha had described. With a broad and rosy face Mrs. Lemon seemed to have laughed her way

through life at the ridiculousness of humanity, and being human herself she had mingled kindliness and indulgence with her merriment.

Mary Evans had several lines in her solemn countenance, graven there by anxiety for the perverseness of mankind in general. She was perplexed and argumentative by nature; she could let nothing go by carelessly, as all social evolution, according to her convictions, was based on one or two principles which she made it her mission to preach. Madeleine was sure she would like Mrs. Lemon. Mary Evans, she felt, would not care for her—would not find her intellectual enough.

While Mrs. Lemon was good-naturedly questioning Madeleine about her plans for the winter, two very elaborately dressed women made their entrance, greeting the hostess flippantly:

"We didn't mean to be late, but Bobby would keep us. We couldn't impress him a bit with 'The Coming Woman'; he said the coming sport was much more interesting!"

They laughed, and in a nonchalant manner spoke to the other women, while Mrs. Wallace whispered to Madeleine:

"Mrs. Phipps-Brown and Grace Westervelt. They are always together. Bobby is Mr. Sutherland, enormously rich. He drives four and goes in for all that sort of thing. He is Mrs. Phipps-Brown's devoted slave."

Mrs. Penfold, the hostess, had disappeared. She



received in a large room which was her husband's studio generally and a dining-room and parlour when Mrs. Penfold wanted to see her friends. She considered painting a profession not altogether aristocratic, and though they were poor she felt that their rescue from bohemianism could only be effected by constant entertaining to affirm her own excellent social position. She had no children and did not want any.

On the arrival of her last guests she disappeared behind a long screen which traversed the room, dividing it in two. It was necessary always to superintend matters herself, as she was not sure of her inexperienced servants.

Over a green cloth spread on the table were a variety of Japanese vases, each with a chrysanthemum in it. Odds and ends of sets, different in colour and design, several vessels and utensils whose purpose was not clear, contributed to an ensemble which Alida's fashionable friends called "artistic." The Penfolds were too poor to do as other people did. Mrs. Phipps-Brown always raved about Alida's perfect taste and asked advice which she did not follow. Brought up in the opulence of the *nouveau riche* and having heard only money talked of all her life, Mrs. Phipps-Brown considered an artist something worth discovering. She had discovered Clyde Penfold and aided in making him the fashion.

Behind the screen Alida found that the maid, actuated by some kindly impulse, had filled all the

wine glasses. There was nothing to do about it: she could not pour the wine back in the bottles. Everybody would see it was the first time she had had wine for lunch, but Mrs. Phipps-Brown had served champagne when the club met at her house. Alida knew they could not afford this added expense. She was, however, indignant at her husband for proposing that chocolate or tea would do as well as wine. Now the golden liquid had sent its fire in bubbles to the glasses' rims.

"How perfectly stupid," she was angrily thinking, "to try and entertain without money. Artists are unpractical failures. We shall always be poor. Only the rich should pretend to paint!" Mortified and provoked, as a vindication for her own false vanity she covered with abuse the husband who, instead of making money like other men, tried to be an artist.

Once at table, Mrs. Wallace, president of the club, asked Mary Evans to give a *rĕsumé* of the book chosen for discussion.

"You have all been impressed," she began, "by the scientific way in which the author has treated her subject. It is evident that she is a college-bred woman. I cannot be as precise as she, but I will do my best to be clear, and as you have read the book yourselves you can stop me if you think I am inaccurate. In the first place, the writer calls our attention to the fact that in no two countries is the position of woman the same. The Turkish



woman and the French woman, from their training, habits and development, are as different as though they were two distinct species of the human race. To take an example nearer home: the French young girl and her American sister are sisters in nothing but name. Yet let us notice that the position of the civilised man is identical all the world over."

"So far," said Mrs. Wallace, addressing herself to Mrs. Phipps-Brown, "there is nothing new in the book—nothing we need stop to discuss."

From a high arm-chair, where Alida had placed her, at the head of the table, Martha Sheffield added with gentle indifference:

"We haven't come to the astonishing theories yet. There will be plenty to discuss."

"Well, then, to go on," the speaker resumed, "our authority explains why there are such a variety of standards for women and only one for man, and she also predicts for the future of our sex in a way which cannot fail to interest any one who is thoughtful." Miss Evans was warming to her subject. "Man, it is very evident, being the stronger of the two sexes, came naturally to his full development at the time in the history of civilisation when physical force counted for everything in the struggle for life. So far I haven't made any mistakes, have I?"

She asked the president this question, and Mrs. Wallace, in her most earnest manner, responded:

"No; that is clear, I think. We can go on to the conclusions and begin the debate at once."

"The conclusions are so logical that I am amazed Miss Sheffield can call them astonishing. Only listen," she appealed to Madeleine. "Now that the era of actual struggle—now that the animal battle with which Darwin has familiarised us in its details and consequences is over, man has come to his full term of evolution. He has, through the survival of the fittest, pushed to their limit those qualities which have come to be known as masculine. He will go no further. There will not henceforth be the occasion for him to exercise his aptitudes. He must degenerate; while woman, having only in this epoch of intellectual as opposed to physical ideals arrived at the use of her characteristics, at last begins her evolution. As she in turn evolves, gradually the women of all countries will have an equal and like position. It will no longer be said that the great things of the world have all been accomplished by men. The very word great will have a higher meaning than it has had, and women will be the forces to claim all that glory and honour can give. There will be every type of great woman, just as in past ages there has been every sort of great man."

Miss Evans, having finished her *resume*, applied herself to eating what was on her plate. Mrs. Wallace, seeing Madeleine's bewildered expression, explained:



"You must not lose sight of the fact that we are in a new era, which should not be judged by standards of mere convention."

"Do you think," Madeleine asked, "that the position of woman and her relation to man are based on mere conventionality?"

"Certainly," Mrs. Wallace answered, "and that is one of the points I should like to touch upon. As I was saying to your husband the other day, we have passed through various stages before arriving at the present age of science. Much that remains as a relic of sentimentality in this scientific period is hostile to our free advancement. For example, the idea of the woman being economically dependent on the man and the idea of the family as a binding tie; religion, which brought about wars and crusades; indeed, every sort of manifestation which is the outcome of the environment that led man to his full physical perfection. These things were right and necessary in their time, but we have got beyond them. Better still, we have got beyond the hour when woman can be repressed by the overweening importance attached to mere strength. The effort of the individual whom society respects must be made, not for his personal brute force, but for the good of humanity—the intellectual and the moral good. This change of purpose and the consequent secondary usefulness of man has emancipated the women of our generation as their sisters never were before them."

It was Martha Sheffield who asked:

"You don't think, then, that family life, religion, woman's dependence even, have contributed to the progress of humanity?"

Without waiting Mrs. Lemon answered vigorously:

"Of course! Pasteur himself said: 'Science does not console, and man needs consolation.' I certainly shall not care to live in the days when women are to be so far advanced that there is no more family life."

"How feminine!" Mary Evans exclaimed, exchanging glances with Mrs. Wallace. "It is easy to see, Mrs. Lemon, that you were not trained in college debates. The point is not whether we like or do not like an idea, but how well founded it is on the truth."

"Well, suppose," Mrs. Phipps-Brown chimed in, "suppose we grant you the old-fashioned family ties as an obstacle to progress: do you think that woman should be loosed from every bond? That she should not marry? Or, more to the point, that, having married and finding herself hampered thereby, do you believe she should divorce and get rid of the obligations which you call conventional?"

Mrs. Phipps-Brown was the wife of a weakling. She had cared for him in a half sort of way at the time of their marriage, but he had drunk her affection to death and was drinking himself to the same goal. They lived an independent existence under the same roof. Sport, society, gambling and flirting were her



diversions. Her present question was one which she had put to herself often in thinking of her husband.

"I believe," she concluded, "there would be even more divorces than there are, Mrs. Wallace, if woman thought she were becoming a higher type by casting off marital duties."

"And the children?" Mrs. Lemon asked. "When the great women are at the head of the nation who will take care of the children?"

"Take care of them!" Grace Westervelt exclaimed this with an outburst of laughter. "Will there be any children? How can you expect women to live the lives even we do and have any time for the nursery? You know it's not a bit smart or modern to have a baby in your arms!" She rested her elbow on the table and pulled the leaves from the flower in front of her, while her eyes made the tour of her listeners. "Confess you all agree with me. Oh, no! Mrs. Dillon is actually blushing!"

Before Madeleine's confusion was further commented upon Mary Evans interrupted in her argumentative voice:

"You evidently do not understand the true seriousness of the writer. You make her theories a matter of fashion and convention, which is just what Mrs. Wallace was trying to demonstrate as false."

"But it is so sad for the men, this idea of their

going down hill while we climb alone to heights of glory."

It was Martha Sheffield who spoke, and Grace Westervelt again laughed:

"Yes, the poor men! They are not so brilliant now that they can afford to do any deteriorating!"

"Come," said Mrs. Wallace, "we are getting frivolous. It would be better not to go on with the discussion than to continue it in this spirit."

Alida gave the signal to rise. They passed to the other side of the screen, and coffee was served in artistic cups without handles or saucers. Several books were proposed, and one was chosen for the next meeting.

"I venture to say," Mrs. Lemon's agreeable voice chimed with the tinkling of silver spoons in the brown coffee—"I venture to say that if any one could see into our innermost hearts he would find a collection of shrines, more or less well kept up, but all dedicated to the very sort of sentimentality which Mrs. Wallace says is hostile to our advancement."

After a first unfortunate marriage which ended in divorce, Mrs. Lemon had fallen desperately in love and married an invalid without money.

"Our discussion would be interesting," she continued, "if each of us would tell the truth. I know so much more about people than I do about science. I am sure that every one of us here, no matter how much she may be impressed with the coming woman, has in her an old-fashioned love-centre—like a



nerve-centre," she said to Mrs. Wallace. "And I believe that, little as we suspect it ourselves, that love-center is the vital part of us. When it is gone life goes with it."

"Such a theory does very well for you," Mary Evans argued. "You believe in emotions, but you could not expect us to agree with you, and, moreover, how can you prove what you state?"

"Let each of us tell what she is going to do this afternoon. It won't be a proof, but it will be an indication of the kind of love-god each of us worships. No cheating, though! Only the truth will be allowed!"

Alida Penfold, looking embarrassed, began at once her confession.

"This afternoon I shall have to lend a hand to household matters—to 'clearing up.' I can assure you the life of the poor artist's wife is not all rose colour."

"Poor woman!" was Grace Westervelt's quick response. "Couldn't you come for a spin with me in the new bubble? I have two youths in tow, and would be so glad if you took one of them off my hands. I only asked them because the machine runs better with four."

"How can you automobile in this weather?" Mrs. Phipps-Brown interrupted. "I'm going straight home to play bridge by the fire until dinner time. Bobby promised to come in. I owe him forty points, so he's sure to turn up sooner or later. I



ought to go slumming to-day—it's my day. You see I'm perfectly frank, but not so wicked as I seem. I'll send some stuff down by the footman to the worst cases. The footman really has more tact than I have with the poor!" Laughing, she made her adieux.

Mary Evans had a board meeting at the Settlement.

"I should have run home a moment to see father," she said, looking at her watch. Her father was blind and an invalid; she was his only child; her mother had been dead many years.

"It's too late now," she concluded. "He has the servants, and I simply can't miss this monthly meeting."

"My afternoon," said Martha Sheffield, gathering her gray furs around her throat and putting her hands deep in her muff as she got up to go, "my afternoon sounds more frivolous than the others. I am going to spend it in my own library with the best and kindest man I know, simply to talk and exchange ideas. There are so few men who can talk, and with a woman it's not the same, is it?"

There remained only Mrs. Wallace, Mrs. Lemon and Madeleine.

The president of the club was to have a consultation at three with several doctors concerning the condition of her son's throat. They had made a culture at the laboratory with the germs taken from Ballestier's tonsils, and they were to



give her a definite answer as to whether an operation were necessary or not.

"My duties seem very simple," Madeleine ventured. "I shall walk home, play with my babies until their supper time, and then write to my husband."

"Now that you have all given yourselves away," exclaimed Mrs. Lemon, "I am going to tell my precious Lemon about the party, and just exactly what each of you loves best in the world."

Madeleine had meant to send Phillip an account of the discussion, but she found it hard to write as she wanted to.

"I will wait until he is here and tell him then. I don't believe I could make him understand in a letter. It's so new, so progressive! Perhaps he wouldn't even approve some of the things they said."

So in her letter she spoke only of the children, of her pleasure in finding Martha Sheffield again, of Mrs. Wallace's kindness, and of her own devotion and love.



CHAPTER IX

Martha Wants Her Freedom

"He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune: for they are impediments to great enterprises either of virtue or mischief."—Bacon.

Martha Sheffield had told Mrs. Lemon quite frankly that she was going home to receive a friend.

This friend, like a prisoner in his cell, paced up and down her drawing-room. It was already late when she left Alida's, and he waited with that peculiar impatience which is contemptuous of time, which takes liberties with the clock's hands, which gives them wings or puts lead upon them—he waited with the impatience of love. He had a fine, noble face, smooth-shaven; his features were regular, his expression somewhat sad. A few gray hairs which had appeared prematurely among the black added ten years to his age, and it would have been difficult to say whether he were twenty-eight or thirty-eight.

He walked at first from door to window with a satisfaction he would not have admitted to himself. He was in the house of the woman he loved, and he had arrived in advance of her, so that he had a moment for reflection and self-possession. He



realised that what would pass that day between him and Martha would be important and definitive. The thought of it alone moved him. The stiff collar which bound his throat like an iron band seemed to tighten.

Tired of his manifold excursions up and down the room, he stopped and gazed round him with an ardent, ever-renewed curiosity, as though he had not twenty times, under similar circumstances, examined and scrutinised Martha's belongings. Every detail, the very colour of the photographs, the crack in the corner of a certain frame, the portraits, the bric-a-brac, had acquired as fixed a place in his memory as in this boudoir, which Martha had no caprice for changing; to leave it as it always had been she considered a tribute of loyalty to the past.

Faxon's attention became intent upon a pastel portrait of Miss Sheffield. She was dressed in an evening gown, and the artist had rendered the pearl-like quality of her throat and arms admirably. In the sloping, graceful shoulders, in their full, undulating lines, there was a southern warmth reflected over their snowy whiteness which gave them the charm of a delicious fruit.

Faxon remembered that the first time he had seen Miss Sheffield she had been like this. It was at a ball. Three years had passed, and since that meeting, except in moments when his work absorbed him, one thought had been dominant in his mind.

"If Martha Sheffield does not marry me my life will be a miserable failure."

Here, alone, *tête-à-tête* with the portrait, he did not lack for courage to say what was in his heart. Then why was it, he asked himself, that as soon as she appeared, he, a lawyer whose profession it was to make use of words, he who had a reputation among his fellow lawyers for his sound reasoning powers, should suddenly become mute? The tender things he longed to express he was either unable to pronounce or else they became commonplace as soon as they passed his lips.

Reluctantly he left the pastel and turned to a photograph on a table by him, where it stood alone. It was the photograph of a man, and through the simple glass which covered it he could read the signature in one corner. He started to pick up the little frame; then he stopped, folded his arms behind his back, and the shadow of a frown crossed his forehead.

It always troubled him to see other men attentive to Martha, and there were so many who were attracted by her grace, her charm, and her intelligence. Faxon knew, without being told, that they all cherished a certain hope—that they were, so to speak, playing a game. When he watched them with her, their ease, their familiarity, their outbursts of gaiety exasperated him, but he did not fear them as rivals. Martha had never spoken the word of encouragement to him which would have



justified his building castles in the air; yet he was sure that in her home, in her friendship he held a place which would never be accorded to these young men. They might do very well for leading a cotillion, but as soon as the violins were silent and the lights extinguished they must become again like strangers.

Yet whenever he saw Martha Sheffield with this man whose portrait he was now looking at all Faxon's confidence fell to ruin. He knew only too well this delicate profile, this high-arched nose whose nostrils dilated so easily, these marked eyebrows, these eyes slightly in shadow, this mustache whose upturned ends revealed a somewhat sensual mouth. Every line of this face was drawn with passion and decision. Faxon hated it, and at the same time, in spite of jealousy, he could not withhold a secret admiration for its manly seductiveness.

When this man appeared in a drawing-room, with one quick, intense, somewhat haughty glance he took in everything and everybody. He looked for one only, and that one was Miss Sheffield, and Faxon knew it. Once he had found her, Robert Van Allan went directly up to her without any apparent impatience, but with an assurance and at the same time a reserve which, to a man in love as Faxon was, meant everything. And Miss Sheffield greeted this man in the same way he approached her. The moment he crossed the threshold she knew it without even turning her head. Not that

she showed any agitation, but her serenity became a matter of self-control. It seemed to Faxon that in the glance of recognition she exchanged with Van Allan there was a mixture of hostility and submissiveness, and at the point where these two opposing sentiments met there was something not unlike tenderness.

He knew, as did everybody, Robert Van Allan's story. When a cadet at West Point his skill as a horseman, certain astonishing feats he had performed, his exceeding good looks, rumours of his conquests, gave him a reputation as the most popular man among women. He had been practically proposed to by a young girl who was desperately in love with him, and after six weeks of married life which everybody thought happy she had suddenly left him in the middle of the night after a ball from which they had just returned. In her evening dress, her jewels, she had gone back to her father's house, and now for three years they had been separated, without the slightest effort on the part of either to effect a reconciliation. The young wife continued to refuse a divorce which would have given to her husband his freedom.

"It can't be possible," Faxon was saying, to give himself courage, "that Martha Sheffield, who is really so serious at heart, so superior in every possible way—it is not possible that she can care for this questionable person, for he is questionable, her Robert Van Allan!"



He carried his reflections no further. The bell rang, announcing the arrival of Martha.

She entered the room brusquely. On her lips there was the brilliant smile which contrasted so strangely with the sadness of her eyes, her melancholy eyes.

"Have you been waiting long?" she asked.

Faxon blessed the delay to which he owed such a human, such an encouraging welcome.

"I told you the other day," he answered, "I am always waiting for you. I shall always wait for you until the end."

As though she had not heard him, she asked:

"Do you want tea?"

"I want to talk to you, Martha."

"Dear me!" she said. "How serious, how grave you are! I don't want to be serious to-day. I feel like laughing. I have come from the lunch club, where I've heard nothing but solemn, stupid, silly discussions. Do make me laugh!"

With the embarrassment of a man who knows how to love, but who cannot put his feelings into words, he responded:

"It seems to me, Martha, that you have been laughing long enough, and at my expense."

She was shocked at the bitterness of his tone, and also that Faxon made no effort to change his state of mind at her request. She was possessed by a feeling of weariness. She sat down, pulled off her gloves slowly, as though it took all her strength,

put aside her hat with a sigh, as though the weight of the feathers and tulle were overwhelming. Then, with an air of perfect resignation, she said:

"Well, what is it you want to say?"

He sat opposite her. It was not a favourable moment, he knew, to risk the question he meant to put, but he had so often let the chance go by that now he thought:

"Come what may, I have sworn that I would speak to-day, and speak I will."

And he did speak, for a long time, in his low, entreating voice, firm and decided, and which nevertheless seemed abashed of its own sound.

"Often, Martha," he said, "you have commanded me to tell you something of myself, and I have always avoided doing so. To-day you ask nothing, and I volunteer all. It is because I can no longer stand it; believe me, Martha, I have come to the end of my strength, and you are the cause of my discouragement."

A coquette would have answered with feigned astonishment: "I? What have I got to do with your state of mind?"

But Martha was not a coquette. She felt true pity for any one who was capable of love, and for herself first of all. She closed her eyes, and an expression of weariness, more mental than bodily, spread over her face.

Faxon went on:

"Most of the men of my generation, whether



married or single, live at the club when they are not in their offices. They don't seem to cherish for woman the same sentiment that our fathers and our grandfathers did. Is it because the women have abused their power? I don't know, I am sure, but it is certain that the man is becoming detached from the woman. I, for one, Martha, refuse to join the increasing number who are either indifferent or hostile. My dearest memories are those of my home as a boy. My parents were happy together, and I dreamed of finding a wife who would be the corner-stone of such a home as I hoped to build. I searched for her until the days when already my hair was beginning to mingle silver threads among the black. And at the moment when I despaired of finding her, Fate brought me face to face with you. Martha, I have studied you, judged you. I know all the hope, all the loveliness which would flower for you in the love of a tender husband."

She opened her eyes, leaned forward, and with an amazement which was sincere she said:

"How can you say that you know me when I don't even know myself?"

"You do yourself an injustice, Martha."

"Not at all. I judge myself calmly. There are two forces in me of which you understand nothing, and these two forces are always at war. There are times when I belong soul and body to my Puritan ancestors. I have a Puritan conscience in me as

severe and uncompromising as theirs used to be in the olden days. At such times I am convinced that life is a trial imposed upon culpable humanity by an avenging God. Then there are other moments when I seem to be invaded by a mysterious joy. Where it comes from I can't imagine. It is like a southern breeze which, with a touch of the wand, destroys the northern icebergs and reveals a flowering springtime. Not only does my heart fall suddenly and truly in love with pleasure, but it seems as though my body grew lighter—as though I walked with more ease. I feel like laughing, like being with people who are gay, like dancing, like forgetting myself, like making new conquests, like trying—on no matter whom—the power of seduction which seems to emanate from me. And then, just as brusquely, I become sad again. It is a constant upheaval going on within me, using up all the forces of my being, gradually consuming me. I would not make you a good wife, Faxon. When I was gay I would shock you, and when I was low-spirited your kindness, your resignation, would wear on me."

With a touch of despair he said:

"I would rather suffer near you than far from you. Let me tell you how I would cherish you: so unselfishly, Martha, that I would not keep you from doing everything you want. I would let you go away, as far and as often as you wanted, to the foreign countries which have such charm for you. I would stay here in my office. I would



work and wait. I would wait as long as it might please you to stay away. I could console myself in my solitude with the thought, 'She is happy.'"

Martha put her hand on Faxon's arm:

"Don't go on; you mortify me! I can't listen to you without feeling unworthy!"

For an instant he was hopeful.

"Martha!" he cried, "you will let me love you!"

She shook her head slowly.

But he did not take this as a refusal. The very intensity of his passion brought with it an instant's pride.

"What, then, is it"—he groaned rather than spoke the words—"that displeases you in me?"

She, too, felt that the moment was decisive.

"Shall I be frank with you?"

"Yes, yes. For God's sake, tell me the truth!"

He could never forget the expression with which she looked at him.

"You are too good."

"Martha!"

"I could not imagine mixing pity with the love I might have for my husband."

Again, as though she had wounded him, he cried out:

"Martha!"

Then jealousy and anger brought him to his feet; he stood erect before her.

"You speak of frankness," he said. "I shall be as frank as you have been. It is not because I

am 'too good' that you refuse me. It is because you love a worthless man who has you in his power!"

With a quick movement he caught from the table the photograph of Robert Van Allan. He held it out to Martha as though this were the evidence of his failure to win her heart.

The girl had risen. She was pale, but perfect mistress of herself. She said:

"Admitting that you are right—that I do love Van Allan, is there any reason why I shouldn't?"

He had put the portrait back in its place. Close together he pressed his nervous hands.

"How terribly you say that, Martha!"

Then he seemed to realise all the misery of his position. She would never love him; he had often annoyed her by his devotion; now she hated him. He watched her as a dying man gazes for the last time upon a face whose beloved lines he wishes to carry in his mind to the world beyond . . . his eyes filled with tears.

Martha could not endure this. She took his hand in hers and said, a sob in her voice:

"Poor Faxon! You see, our whole life would have been like this!"

He had passed the moment when a word of tenderness could allay his sufferings.

"You are right," he said in a dull monotone. "You are right."

Slowly, decidedly he took leave of her, hoping at every step that she would call him back.



"Do you want me for a friend?" she asked as he reached the door.

"That is impossible," he answered.

"Then good-by."

Her eyes were lowered. She did not see that he had turned for one last look at her. She heard the outside door shut and the sound of footsteps retreating over the sidewalk.

"It is better that it should end in this way," she thought. "If he had come back I might perhaps have yielded to him, and we would both have been desperately unhappy."

CHAPTER X

A Cage Without Birds

Seigneur, préservez-moi, préservez ceux que j'aime,
Frères, parents, amis et mes ennemis même
Dans le mal triomphants,
De jamais voir, Seigneur, l'été sans fleurs nouvelles,
Le cage sans oiseaux, la ruche sans abeilles,
La maison sans enfants.

—V. Hugo.

Charles William Evans, Mary Evans's father, was a lawyer. There were men who remembered to have heard him plead in some well-known case, where the clearness of his logic and the magic of his voice had won for him the admiration of the public. He had kept a brilliant reputation among business men. Suddenly in its midst his career was snapped off short by the most terrible of misfortunes: in less than a year's time Charles Evans had become stone-blind. He had been obliged to sell out his practice and retire from the field of activity on a competence which was barely enough for him and Mary.

In this foundering of all his hopes he had been able to comfort himself with the thought that Mary, given up to her studies and to philanthropic work of all kinds, did not seem to suffer from the change in their circumstances. She had never



shown the slightest pang at their absolutely altered train of living. On the contrary, she seemed glad at the added liberty it gave her for devoting herself entirely to what absorbed her most. It had never occurred to the blind father to complain that his child should dispense outside of her home services which would have brought him endless consolation.

Mr. Evans's favourite moment was when, once dressed and installed in front of the fire, the servant brought him his morning letters. For a long time he turned them over and felt them to distinguish which were the long business envelopes and which the friendly notes. He could tell by the sort of paper, the shape or the perfume, just who had taken the trouble to send him an affectionate greeting. They were not many, these faithful correspondents, and so this particular morning Mr. Evans handled with great curiosity a letter which the servant had told him bore the postmark "Elliston."

"Does it come from Elliston?" he asked. "But we don't know anybody there."

"We" did not mean himself and Mary, but himself and the devoted attendant who served him in his isolation as an indispensable bond between the exterior world and all his memories of the past.

The man tore open the envelope, and Mr. Evans gave a pleased exclamation as he read out the name of Mr. Bradford, his old comrade, Madeleine Dillon's father.

"Bradford!" said he. "Well! well! He hasn't forgotten me! We were at Harvard together. He lost his dear wife a short time after my sorrow came to me. We were both left with daughters. We had suffered and been happy together, so there were many bonds between us. In bygone days, when some case brought Bradford to New York, he used to stay with me. But for several years I have heard nothing of him. He is still in the thick of the fight, I suppose, and like the rest of them he has no time to stop and listen to the groans of the wounded. Well, let's hear what he has to say to me. Is he coming to look me up?"

Mr. Bradford apologised for his long silence, and then wrote to say that that very day his daughter, Mrs. Dillon, who was in New York, would come to call upon him and bring him the best of messages from his old and faithful friend.

"I made inquiries of Madeleine," the letter went on to say, "whether she had not met the daughter of my old comrade, the celebrated Mr. Evans. She answered that she knew Miss Evans, and had, I believe, joined the same club. I wrote at once asking her to go and see you and to take her two little children, so you will make the acquaintance of the whole family at once. Proud grandfather! If the babies bother you, you must turn them out!"

The anticipation of this visit had monopolised Mr. Evans's thoughts all the morning. He was



radiant; smiles played about his face, which was generally almost tragic in its melancholy.

"Tom," he said, "you must have a good look at the eyes and hair of Mrs. Dillon's children, so as to tell me about them later. Her father's hair was as fair as could be and his eyes were very dark. He was stunning as a young fellow—the finest sort of a Harvard man."

When lunch was announced the blind man went alone to table. Miss Evans, the servant told him, had telephoned that she would not be home until late in the afternoon. Such a message usually brought with it a pang of disappointment, but to-day Mr. Evans was only half sorry. He was interested in what Mary was doing, but she had a way of taking possession of the conversation, of applying everything that was said to her own particular case, of absorbing things in a selfish manner, which would have made it difficult for him to thoroughly enjoy his visit with Mrs. Dillon.

At tea time, accompanied by her two children, Madeleine arrived. Fearing her host might not feel equal to seeing the babies, she told them to wait in the hall while she went up.

Though grief had turned Mr. Evans's hair prematurely white, he had not aged in other ways; he was tall, alert, and distinguished in his bearing. He rose to greet the young woman. She looked almost with fear into the clear limpid eyes whose fixity alone betrayed their impotence.

"Your voice is like your father's," was his first comment. "Do you sing? He was one of our best tenors at college. He had a voice one could not forget."

She explained that since her mother's death her father had never touched the piano nor sung a note, and then she added simply:

"I was such a tiny child when my mother died that I can scarcely remember her. My memories of my father hardly go back to that time."

"I am sure you and he must be great comrades?"

"I gave up going to college," said Madeleine, to whom this sacrifice had recently grown in importance, "because I did not want to leave papa. He scarcely ever dined out, because he did not want me to be alone. He loved to have me sit near him and read or sew. I think there is a more than ordinary sympathy between us."

"Indeed, yes, more than ordinary," repeated the blind man with a shade of bitterness.

Madeleine noticed it; it came as answer to the question she had put herself:

"Why didn't Mary Evans speak to me about her father and tell me that he was blind?"

Not wishing to make any comparisons between her own devotion and the loneliness of her father's friend, she said:

"Poor papa. He is quite by himself now."

"Of course," said Mr. Evans. "It was natural that you should marry. He ought to be rejoiced to



see his daughter in such good hands, with such a good husband. I suppose you go sometimes to Elliston?"

"Yes. We go every year at Christmas time."

"And Bradford comes to see you at your home, too?"

"He is coming to make us a visit this spring when we go back to our country place."

Evans did not envy his friend, but he was touched and glad for his sake that fate should deal more kindly with Bradford than with himself. Bradford's old age promised more happiness than his own. Madeleine divined what was in his thoughts and she was moved.

As though she had already known him for a long time she asked with simplicity:

"What do you do with yourself all day long? I want to write my father something of your life and occupations."

"I spend my days like my nights," the blind man answered, "in darkness. My man servant reads to me, I dictate my letters, I think, and I go over and over my memories. It's only from the past that any light seems to reach me."

His daughter's name was on the tip of Madeleine's tongue. She thought surely the blind man would refer to her in enumerating his few joys, his possible pleasures.

His silence was a shock to her, and she did not dare speak of Mary. It was Mr. Evans who finally

referred to her, but only in connection with outside matters.

"You and Mary belong to the same club, I think?"

It seemed to Madeleine that if she praised the energy and activity of his daughter it would be a satisfaction to this somewhat neglected father, so she said:

"We all stand in admiration before Mary. She knows so much! She expresses her ideas with such precision. She is so extraordinarily intelligent."

Mr. Evans nodded.

"She has found occupations for which she is admirably suited. The life she leads makes her very happy, and I am sure she does a great deal of good. I don't deny the fact that I would rather have seen her otherwise absorbed—that I would have preferred she should marry, as you have done, even though it meant giving her up entirely. You see what egotists all men are, and above all one who is as helpless as I am. It wouldn't be reasonable to expect Mary to sacrifice her life and time to a wreck of humanity like myself. But since I can't have her, I would rather spare her to a husband than to other poor unfortunates whom I don't even know and who don't seem to be any more deserving of pity than I am. Come! come!" he added. "What am I thinking about! You mustn't pay any attention to the wanderings of a melan-



choly old man. If I tire you out you will never come back to see me. Tell me about your children, Bradford's grandchildren. In his letter he promised that you would bring them with you. Why didn't you do so? They wouldn't be afraid of me. Children never notice that I am blind, and I get on very well with them."

"But I did bring them," Madeleine interrupted hastily. "They are downstairs. Shall I go and get them?"

Mr. Evans was delighted.

Madeleine found Edward and Kate talking with Miss Evans, who had come in.

Surprised at meeting the children in the hall, Mary had questioned them as to their names and surnames, as though they were two poor children she had picked up on the street and might take to the Settlement.

"Did you want anything especial of me?" Mary asked. "How stupid of them to show you up to my father's study! You didn't know that he was blind? He is very sad about it."

Madeleine explained in a word why she had come and that she wanted Mr. Evans to see the children.

Mary was astonished.

"Did he ask you to bring them? What a queer idea, since he can't see them. But sick people are always having queer ideas, aren't they?"

Madeleine was rather piqued that Mary should say nothing about Kate and Edward, whom she

had never seen before. She could not resist the temptation of remarking:

"Perhaps Mr. Evans would like to have some grandchildren himself."

Mary laughed outright.

"The poor man! You don't suppose he has any such idea in his head? I should be sorry for him. He has more chance of recovering his sight than of seeing me saddled with a husband and children. What in Heaven's name would I do with them in a life as completely consecrated as mine is to interesting and useful outside things?"

Madeleine had explained to the children before coming that they were going to see a very kind gentleman, who loved little girls and little boys, but who was quite blind, and that for this reason they must be particularly nice to him, and let him kiss them without drawing away from him. In spite of all these warnings she felt somewhat uneasy as they went into Mr. Evans's study, but once she saw the two blond heads under the blind man's large, gentle hands, which caressed them tenderly, she was so relieved and so glad that the colour flushed into her cheeks.

Her satisfaction was of short duration. Kate, having caught sight of a bronze paper-weight in the form of a goat, stretched out her arms toward the table and reiterated:

"Little goat, mamma, little goat. Katie wants the goat."

"Hush!" her mother murmured reproachfully.

But Mr. Evans had heard her, and he seemed delighted that there was something in his possession which she cared for.

"Mary," he said to his daughter, "give the little shepherdess her goat!" And he laughed.

From the moment they had entered the study Mary's lips had flattened themselves into a horizontal line, a smile which grew more and more pronounced as she handed the baby the bronze object and cast at the same time a glance toward Madeleine which plainly said:

"You see what it is to have children? You can't even take them to call upon a blind man without their asking for a bronze goat!"

Edward's turn was yet to come. He watched Mr. Evans closely and seemed to be wondering at his somewhat hesitating movements. As a *résumé* of his observations he said in a proud tone to his mother:

"*I'm* not blind, am I, mamma?"

Madeleine's cheeks grew scarlet. But Mr. Evans laughed heartily at this wondering query of the blithesome, light-haired little fellow.

"You are very much to be congratulated, my dear child. I advise you to stay as you are and never to get as I am. I can't even have the pleasure of seeing you or your dear mother, who must be very good to look at if she is like my old friend, your grandfather."

"My grandfather lives at Elliston," Edward responded promptly.

And Kate, more demure, added:

"He is going to send me a doll for Christmas."

She was still seated on Mr. Evans's knee, the bronze goat held tightly in her tiny clutch. Mary Evans took Edward by the hand and drew him toward the table. She wanted Madeleine to benefit by this chance. She would give her an object-lesson whereby she might profit later.

"Would you like me to show you some pictures?" she asked the child.

He looked rather distrustfully at her. He had not expected so agreeable a proposition from a person who had only half inspired him with confidence. Tactfully he asked in turn:

"Where are the pictures?"

"Come and sit down by me and I will show you."

"Yes, do," Madeleine hastened to add, fearing that he would refuse.

Miss Evans did not take out a book. She slipped a piece of paper from the writing-case on the desk and pulled a stylographic pen from the pocket of her jacket. Edward, whose mother had often drawn animals for him on rainy days, when he could not go out, studied Mary with interest.

"Just now," she began, "you said what is perfectly true—that you are not blind. This gentleman is blind, though. Do you know why?"

"Because God wanted him to be."

Mary's brows contracted.

"Undoubtedly," she answered; "but there is another explanation—a scientific reason. Look! Can you tell what this is that I am drawing?"

"It's an egg."

"No; it is an eye. Each part of the eye naturally has its name, just as the different parts of the body have names—the legs, the arms, the head. This," and she pointed to the drawing, "is the pupil, this is the iris, this is the optic nerve." She pronounced the words slowly and distinctly. "You see that little string there?"

"I haven't got a string in my eye," Edward pouted, sticking out his under lip as though tears were imminent. At the same time he slid down from the sofa stealthily, like a prisoner who takes advantage of the jailer's busy moment to escape.

Miss Evans did not try to keep him. She delighted in anatomical drawing, and she went on adding here and there essential touches with her stylographic pen.

Madeleine and the children meanwhile took leave of Mr. Evans.

"Yes, yes," he said to the little girl, "I want you to have the goat for your own. The next time you come to see me you can bring in exchange one of your wooden animals. Don't let it be long," he added to Madeleine, "before I see them again. You can be sure I shall write very soon to Mr.

Bradford to tell him I think him a happy father and a most fortunate grandfather."

It did not occur to Mary that her father's words had a tone of regret, a loving suggestion to her. Absorbed by her own thoughts, she went on contemplating the drawing she had made. At the foot of the stairs she gave it to Madeleine.

"You can show this to the boy when you have time," she said. "You can't begin too soon the use of such drawings. They are wonderful for giving the children a true impression of certain scientific facts difficult to grasp otherwise. Do it instead of wasting their time on pictures of giants and fairies and dwarfs. You can get these coloured prints in series to hang on the nursery wall. They have the whole history, for example, of oatmeal, from its planting in the fields to its complete assimilation in the body. They are remarkable. I will send you the address of the place where you can buy them."



CHAPTER XI

A College Girl's Beau

"The love she bore to learning was in fault."
—Oliver Goldsmith.

As Madeleine went with her bundle of babies down the Evans's steps a very thin, rather shy-looking young man was ringing the bell. She watched him disappear into the house. On the other side of the door Mary Evans was waiting for him. She sat at the desk in the parlour preparing the discussion for the next club meeting when her friend was announced.

"Do you mind a moment, Walter," she asked, "if I finish this? You can find something to read there. I am almost through, and to-morrow's such a busy day I don't know when I can take this up again."

Mr. Wood sat down on the sofa.

His hair—that infallible indication of temperament—was fine and straight; it stayed where it was brushed; in the back, where his hat had ruffled its slickness, there was one lock that did not quite know what to do with itself. He slipped off his glove and smoothed it down. He could see himself reflected in the glass of the bookcase, and for some

time he continued to pat the back of his head. His eyes were of a pale nondescript colour; his lips were pale, and his mouth, even when shut, gave the effect of being open; as there was no well-defined line to indicate where it began and where it ended, it seemed to prolong itself into his face, which was clean-shaven. His collar was very high, and no allowance had been made for a prominent Adam's apple. His cravat, tied neatly, covered only a narrow portion of his pink shirt-front.

When at last Mary was through she went and sat down beside him on the sofa.

"You'll excuse me for coming in a business suit," he said.

"You know," she responded almost severely, "that one of the reasons why I let you come at all is because I don't have to dress to receive you. We are both hard-working people, and it would be ridiculous to waste our time on clothes."

Mary Evans bore the marks of her athletic life during four college years. Her face, tanned and rough, was deeply wrinkled: in her throat the muscles stood out hard and stringy. She wore heavy boots. Her hair, which was very blonde and straight, was always in disorder, and her hands were never cared for.

"I only wish, though," she added, "that your work were as interesting as mine."

"Oh," he explained, "indeed I do, too, but I'm afraid it never will be. You see, you had a college

education; that gives you an advantage—it puts you right upon another plane. It's awfully good of you to bother with me." He looked at her. "I've read every one of those books on the list you gave me, and I was going to ask you to recommend some more."

"Did you make the notes, as I asked you to?"

"I don't have much time. I'm generally at the office until late, this season, but I'll do my best. I know it's a good idea."

"It's the only way to remember what one has read."

"I thought those essays by Spencer were especially fine. Have you got anything more like them?"

"They are wonderful, aren't they? There would be fewer spoiled children if girls were made to study such things at school." She was thinking of Madeleine and of the babies who had so tried her during their visit.

"Most women," she went on, "have such absolutely untrained minds. There is really no pleasure in talking to a woman unless she is college-bred."

"That makes me feel rather ashamed of myself," he responded.

"With a man it is entirely different. You have had your natural place in creation ever since the world began. Woman has been treated like a poor domesticated animal; nothing has been done to develop her intellect; she has been guarded from all contact with life. The only thing that has been

given full sway is her sex. Her sex has simply run riot; it has kept her the slave of man; it has prevented her from becoming independent and a bread-winner; it has absolutely perverted her. The expression 'just like a woman' has only a contemptuous meaning. 'Just like a woman' is a synonym for everything that is exasperating, unreasonable, supersensitive, not to be counted on, and generally trying to the patience. There are only two types of women—or at least there have been up to now—and they are both obstacles to progress; but this generation promises, with college training, mental and physical, to produce a new and decidedly progressive type."

"I guess, if anybody ought to know that, it's you," was the young man's hearty acquiescence.

"The commonest type of woman is of course the housekeeper. What a life! They begin innocent as lambs; this, it appears, is half the charm for their lord and master. The man doesn't propose to teach them anything except how to adore him. When this lesson is thoroughly learned he is generally tired of them. They bore him to death and it is too late for them to learn anything else."

"I guess that's so. You see a good many men who seem pretty badly stuck."

"The man," she went on, assuming the argumentative air which had won her a reputation for debating at college—"the man is entirely to blame for this type of female. Before marriage he loves

her because she is 'so different from other women,' and as soon as they encounter the serious responsibilities of life he says to her: 'For Heaven's sake, why can't you be like other women?' What can you expect of her, given that her mind has never been trained and that she has no education? It is entirely the man's fault! But there is another type of woman, who avenges her sisters by being the ruin of man. She's not the housekeeper, but the sphinx. She is mysterious, magnetic, unattainable; instead of counting on her innocence to charm, she hides her ignorance with a dexterity that makes everybody think she knows more than they do. It is no hum-drum devotion that she demands of a man as proof of his love for her. What she wants is to be put before every duty. There is no end to the havoc she willingly plays with a man's career; in fact, she dreams as a supreme tribute that he may sacrifice his honour for her. It's a charming arrangement, isn't it? —men and women, the two halves of humanity, working systematically against each other like natural enemies!"

Mr. Wood looked with admiration at his companion.

"When do you get time to think out all these things?" he asked her.

Walter Wood was only a boy. He had come alone to New York at fifteen and gone into a bank, where for a time he made hardly enough to live

in a miserable second-class boarding-house. He was desperately lonely; he was timid—timid in his work and in his pleasures. Poor food and overwork kept him below par.

Like the rest of mankind, without knowing it, what he wanted was to forget himself. This search for oblivion from the personality with which each of us is endowed is the mainspring of activity. Work gives it to those whose talent permits them to become absorbed; love gives it to those who have temperament; vice gives it to those who are depraved. Walter Wood had neither talent, temperament, nor any vice. If he had not been overworked Mary Evans would have bored him. Senseless as he had become with years of effort begun too soon, he let her replace a diversion. Momentarily as he listened to her, in his discomfort at being inferior and more ignorant than she, he forgot the routine of his daily fatigues.

Their conversations were never personal. To-day, however, there was something that troubled Walter; he wanted to ask advice, yet he did not know where to begin. His interest in what she was saying was distracted by the combinations which his mind suggested for telling her of his anxiety. As a continuation of the theories she had been expressing, and as though to finish with the subject, he said.

"All those questions about women and the sort

of wives they make can't make very much difference to me."

"Why not?" asked the girl. "Don't you think it is the duty of every man to know something about such matters? The present deplorable position of woman results from the very fact that men have never occupied themselves about her true destiny!"

"Yes," responded Walter; "but, poor as I am, I can of course never expect to marry."

"*Marry!*" she cried. "Neither do I ever expect to marry—at least, not in the way that people marry to-day. I could imagine, perhaps some time when I am much older, taking a companion who would be willing to work by my side, to be my friend, on condition that he leave me absolute freedom to develop my individuality—that I remain independent, body and soul, as I now am!"

"Do you suppose," asked the young man, "that marriage in the future will be arranged in that way?"

"Yes," she answered; "certainly. The poor slave of to-day will be emancipated at last; woman will be the physical equal of man (his intellectual equal she already is); she will be economically free, as able a bread-winner as he. The race will be perpetuated by the occasional and deliberate mating of two perfect types."

The discussion was going beyond the point where Walter found it a diversion.

"One must have tremendous leisure," he thought to himself, "to plan into the future as she does."

"I don't believe," he added aloud, "that I should ever find time to carry my reflections so far while there are so many pressing things that need attention."

He hoped this might serve as a sort of hint and that she would question him about his own anxieties. What she said was:

"You should try to arrange your life so as to have freedom of mind in order to consider these great problems.

"But——" he interrupted.

"It is only a matter of habit. You allow your thoughts to be invaded by all sorts of anxieties, but if you schooled yourself as I do you could keep free from even the most pressing worry. Where should I be in my philanthropic work if I permitted myself, for example, to fret about the house, and above all about my father? I simply put him out of my mind. I know that he has everything that he can possibly need, and that I would not do as well for him as others. I am not fitted for the sort of service he requires. It would make me nervous in no time. It would be a sentimental sacrifice if I were to give up what is so clearly my duty—the settlement work—and ruin all my future chances, and lose this rare opportunity to make something of myself, for a man who has led his life, who cannot last many years, and who would

be made more selfish if he were allowed to accept this sacrifice from me. No, Walter," she added. "Try to form the habit of putting from you everything which does not contribute to your own development, the cultivation of your own individuality."

How could he speak to her now of what was tormenting him? His courage, which had held good for so many years, was at an ebb. He had no friends among the worldly young women of New York; he could not afford the clothes necessary to go out in society. Half of his earnings he shared every month with a sister whose husband was an invalid. He did not revolt in the least at this responsibility; in fact, the thought that he was of use in aiding to support a family had stirred what was most manly in him. But he was lonely. He was oppressed. His arms were weary of carrying high an ideal. At the bank he went by the name of "Goodie-goodie."

Six o'clock struck from the parlour mantelpiece. Mary got up.

"I'm awfully sorry, Walter," she said, "but I promised to read this report to Mrs. Wallace before dinner, and she dines at seven. You will come in on Sunday again, will you? Don't forget my advice. I know you'll find it sound, though it may require a little effort of concentration at first."

It was she who took leave of him.

Alone in the hall he gathered up his belongings,

put on his hat, and then went down the steps after shutting the door heavily.

Still in pursuit of the oblivion he had failed to find with Mary, he was traversed by a reckless desire to do something wrong. The monotony of his habits must be interrupted. The boys at the bank had half jeeringly given him a rendezvous for Sunday night. They were going to amuse themselves according to their brutal fashion. He knew where he could find them. He knew that there would be with them women who were neither housekeepers, sphinxes, nor college graduates. He knew that they would all get drunk.

It was time yet to reach them before dinner.

He hailed a Columbus Avenue car, got into it, and paid his fare. Now that the decision was taken, he felt a sense of relief. He was impatient for the moment of forgetfulness, no matter what it cost, which awaited him with his companions.

CHAPTER XII

A Soul at Bay

"The will to do, but not the soul to dare."—W. Scott.

Robert Van Allan, as he rang the bell and stood waiting at Miss Sheffield's door, could hear the sounds of a piano. Once in the hall he drew off his gloves and laid aside his fur-lined coat deliberately, as though he were questioning this music, as though he had something to learn from it.

The day before he and Martha had seriously quarrelled. They had met in the afternoon for tea at Grace Westervelt's and Martha had let Van Allan walk home with her. They had returned on foot in the winter twilight, cold and clear. Suddenly she had said to him:

"Robert, what would you say if I were to marry?"

He had made no answer. He was wounded by the question. The violence of his nature, the intensity of his love made it seem to him either an insult or a cruel bit of coquetry.

But Martha persisted. She was, with the supersensitiveness of those who love, hurt that he should not have uttered at once some protestation, that he should not have cried out "Enough!" or "I for-

bid!" In an instant she was unstrung; it was she who responded to her own astonishing question.

"It doesn't make any difference to you. I can do as I like, I suppose. I can marry or not; it's my own affair. I don't belong to you, do I?"

The man stopped short. He caught Martha by the arm and through the thickness of her fur she could feel the vigour of his clasp. What she had just said so shocked him that he was like an athlete who has lost his wind. He could not recover himself. It was with difficulty that he could pronounce, in a stifled voice, the name of the girl.

"Martha!"

She felt that he was suffering. She was at the same time delighted and in despair. She waited for him to say the word which would come as relief to both of them. Impatient, hostile still, she cried:

"Answer me, Robert! Say something!"

The truest love shelters in its heart a judge; not the ordinary argumentative lawyer, but a judge who notices every discordant word, makes a memorandum of every sentence that could wound, sums them up, and brings them out in his pleading long after love has forgiven them and forgotten them. He harps upon misunderstandings. Hearts that are ready to fly one to the other he keeps from perfect harmony. He wishes every injury to be repaired; he insists upon it as though it were his right. Robert was undergoing the tyranny of this

odious witness. He knew Martha too well, he cared for her too ardently, not to feel sure, by her very impatience, of what her intentions were with regard to marrying. If he had yielded to his impulse he would have said simply:

"Since we love each other, what is the use of vainly torturing ourselves?"

But he had to give satisfaction to the inward judge who scorns the generosity of lovers, who gloats over the errors of the plaintiff. Angrily he responded:

"Quite true. You have kept your self-control when I was no longer master of myself. Whatever you decide you carry out with cold-blooded calm. If you see fit to marry you will marry, without even troubling to find out the depths of desperation you drive me to by so doing. Don't you think it would be more loyal to announce your intentions simply, instead of trying to force my outraged love of you into uttering some explanation which afterward you will make use of as an excuse?"

Martha was stirred by this. Since he did not doubt her—since he felt that she was unhappy, why was he not lenient with her? He was a man, the stronger of the two. If really he loved her unflinchingly, could he not be generous?

They had parted without any further explanation. But as the door was closing she had murmured in a voice of entreaty:

"Robert, you will come to-morrow at four, won't you? I beg of you."

And he had bowed good-by without promising anything, without speaking again.

Martha did not stir from the piano when Van Allan came into the room. Her blue eyes sought his with an expression of tenderness, of happiness, which was in delicious contrast to the melancholy of her mouth.

"I was playing for you to come," she said. "You know music exercises a power over the most ferocious monsters."

He smiled. Under his dark mustache his teeth flashed youth and strength.

"May I come nearer in order to feel the power?"

"Stand here," she said, "behind me, so that you can see how I play to you. There is no mystery in words—they speak too plainly—but in this atmosphere of melody it seems as though my feelings were protected—as though I need not be ashamed to let you know them."

She had never played with so much abandon. To the man she quickly communicated her agitation. The treble was a prayer, desperate, pure, uplifted toward an invisible God; the monotonous tones of the bass were an ardent supplication, obstinate, incessant; and together they were the echo of a duo which, for over a year, their two souls, whether far distant or close together, whether silent or in communication, had sung as they turned

one toward the other. Suddenly the vibrant appeal which ran as under-current to the music rose so impelling that Martha's hands stopped cold on the ivory keys. She could only murmur the name:

"Robert!"

And shutting her eyes she leaned against the man by her side.

His arms were outstretched to receive her. She was not inert, but keenly alive, on the contrary—exhilarated, intoxicated, and as though swept on the wave of love. It seemed to her that she had never been so strong nor so fragile, that all the force which her soul contained was at her command, and that nothing would be so delicious as to thrust it aside.

Robert knelt by her. Both of her hands she had placed on his shoulders in one of love's gestures —to draw her to him if he moved away, to hold him back if he should come nearer. And unceasingly she repeated, as though it bubbled up from some spring hidden in her heart and fell fresh and brilliant across the threshold of her lips:

"Robert! Robert!"

To quench his thirst at this pure source, whose taste his lips already knew, he need only lean more eagerly against the hands that held him back. Yet before he gave himself up to the power of this philter which she offered him he had something to say to her. Confidence must be reëstablished; an agreement must be arrived at. His breath

coming fast, his eyes fixed upon Martha's eyes with persistent questioning, he murmured:

"You love me?"

She laid her arms against his head, pressing his burning forehead in the perfumed folds that covered her beating breast.

"Listen, beloved, to the answer my heart gives you."

He listened.

The air was still, fraught with the last vibrations of the music. Outside in the winter night the electric cars glided over their rails with the ominous rumbling of a storm. The clanging of their bells proclaimed a great unknown force brought within the power of man. The clock seemed to tick more slowly, as though, in the life of two human beings, it were marking a halt on the highway of destiny. The tea-kettle, forgotten, sang over its flickering lamp like a cricket in the summer grass. And above all these sounds, commonplace and terrible, Robert heard Martha's heart beating its confession. It was an infinitely gentle murmur; it rose, increased, died away, and started again abruptly. It told of a hope ardent and determined; there were sudden suffocations which brusquely ended in a mortal silence. Robert listened. This voice without words at last revealed to him what he longed to know, and what timid lips could never, even in the shadow, have softly enough pronounced.

Martha's head had fallen back among the cush-

ions of the divan. She was so deliciously tired of resisting, so indifferent to everything except one exquisite sensation, the weight of Robert's head resting against her heart. And this heart she let speak with abandon. She let it tell all her secrets, all the anguish she had suffered in the past, the struggles, the scruples, the half-accomplished impulses, the battles with a timorous conscience, the audacity of her desire when away from him, the timidity, fear, revulsion in his presence. She took no part now in the discussion; she was only a merciful witness. She smiled with enticing grace when she felt Robert's hands glide from her waist to her throat, passionate, enveloping, when the kiss for which she waited in certainty caught her lips in its embrace.

It was as though the cloud that for several never-to-be-forgotten moments had floated without weight in the air had suddenly burst. With a blinding rapidity which overwhelmed her she felt herself falling into the abyss. She was not alone; in her descent Robert was with her. She knew his presence by the hands which laid their heavy claim upon her shoulders—the kiss whose freshness turned to fire. An instant only remained wherein she might assemble her forces, check herself in the fall. She had no time to reflect. Like a flash it came, an awakening of the inherited conscience which slumbered in her, ever on the watch like an instinct of preservation,

ready at the supreme hour to rescue her. Suddenly, as though Robert's embrace were a burning coal, she freed herself from him and cried out:

"Robert! What is to become of us? Oh, Robert, save me! protect me!"

Her supplication, Van Allan knew, was not a caprice nor a warning to his audacity that the girl was without defense. It was to his love that Martha appealed to guard her from the madness of love.

Too often had he come up against this barrier, placed at the last moment before him by Martha's scruples. It was he now in turn who brusquely drew away.

"I sometimes ask myself," was what he said, "whether you have ever showed the slightest sincerity in your conduct toward me—whether you have not been playing a comedy in which you allotted me the *rôle* you considered the most amusing. It pleases you, I suppose, to see a man of my type give up the life which, however exaggerated the reports of it, was undeniably reckless and venturesome, and throw himself at your feet to be your slave. If you had made up your mind to go no further, you should have warned me at the end of the first act, before the comedy had become a tragedy. But no, that was not what you wanted. You wished to see me driven to madness, and then at the last instant, because of some conscientious scruple, you were to vanish."

Up and down the room he paced, returning now and then to the divan where Martha sat immovable, her eyes closed and encircled by shadows which darkened and grew more intense as he spoke.

"Blame me," she murmured, "condemn me, but don't say I have been false to you."

"No?"

"Not false—not false. I have been as sincere, as carried away, as you."

"Martha, dearest!" His tone had changed. He had flung himself down on the floor before her. Opening her eyes, she looked at him.

"You may perhaps hate me," she said, "but you can't feel contempt for me."

His head bowed against her knees; he could feel that she caressed his hair as she went on:

"You know as well as I do that I have never been calculating. I realised that you were not free to marry me and that there could be no other outcome but love to our friendship. Yet I came to you simply, without hesitation—have you forgotten—as soon as I knew that you cared for me?"

To both of them the memory was vivid—the day, the hour. In Robert's eyes there were tears.

"When I saw that under your influence," she continued, "you led me where you would, far beyond the limits of what I knew to be right and honourable, I did not resist; I did not try to steel myself against your charm for me. No, no, beloved. I went over my memories. I loved you,

and far more than you know in thought I yielded to you."

"Martha!"

Despairingly she shook her head.

"Oh, don't let us reconsider what is irrevocable. You must hear me to the end. When I am away from you," she spoke with difficulty, her voice alone showing the conflict which waged in her heart, "when I am alone I am as reckless as you. As soon as you are here, as soon as you plead with me, I am all defense. I long to be yours; I am yours, Robert. But there is another Martha, a creature who has come down from past days when our ancestors suffered so much that their descendants are incapable of joy. That other self will be forever between us. Couldn't you deliver me from it? Couldn't you free me from this enemy to our happiness?"

What was the man to think? Was this not an encouragement? His arms were about her as he whispered:

"I will free you from every shadow." And drawing her closer he repeated: "They will flee before love."

And again, as the man's ardour rang in his supplications, she thought only of his recklessness, heard his feverish words only to be frightened by them. She realised that to him nothing made any difference. She must loose the iron bond which held her.

"Let go of me!" she cried. "I shall call!"

"Martha! Martha!"

"Coward!" The word slipped from her. She attempted to protest, but in an instant Robert's manner had changed to something like disgust. He could see that all the future, so long as he endured it, would be a repetition of this same terrible scene. His decision was made.

"Which is it?" he asked. "You must know, Martha. Do you love me or do you wish only to keep my love no matter what suffering you cause?"

For answer she hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"You realise, then, that it is the end." He held out his hand. She did not take it. The door opened and closed. Without having heard his name again pronounced he had gone.

CHAPTER XIII

Organised Charity

"Man does not live by bread only."

As Madeleine dressed in her warm boudoir she saw with a tinge of mortification that it was already ten o'clock. She had been to a dance the night before at Mrs. Phipps-Brown's, and she had overslept. The children had gone out when she awoke; this was the first time she had missed their morning visit. Mrs. Wallace and her friends were so kind in offering to do everything for her that she could not refuse their invitations even if it meant seeing a little less of the babies. There would be plenty of time later, in years to come, at the Moorlands, for devoting herself completely to her family.

In order to feel more security about the children when she was away from them she had accepted Mrs. Wallace's suggestion and engaged a German governess who had had the kindergarten training and who had also spent six months in the Babies' Hospital. Mrs. Wallace considered her a treasure, and though she asked a large price, it seemed to Madeleine that it would be folly to

miss such a chance. Since Fraulein had been with them the system of feeding and caring for the young Dillons had been completely revolutionised. Madeleine, in perfect confidence, consented to a change of diet; the children were forbidden bread, sweets, pure milk, and most of the things which their mother had thought were absolutely necessary for their health; all sorts of passive games were substituted for the active romps which had made the Moorlands nursery so boisterous; and Fraulein insisted that they have a variety of underclothing of different weights so as to change with every rise or fall of the temperature. It was true that for the first time in their lives the boy and the girl both had colds, but the German assured Mrs. Dillon that they would probably have had pneumonia if she had not changed their flannels three times the previous day.

All of Madeleine's mornings were taken up in one way or another. She had joined a fencing-club with Grace Westervelt; she made a weekly excursion into the slums with Mrs. Wallace; Mrs. Phipps-Brown was teaching her to play bridge; there was the Lunch Club and a fortnightly sewing class at Mrs. Lemon's; and she had gone into a course of bookbinding with Mary Evans. Sunday was her only free day. Compared with the former Madeleine, though she had been only six weeks in New York, she felt like a woman who was really living.

This was a particularly busy day. She made haste to finish dressing and hurried around to Mrs. Wallace's, but Mrs. Wallace was herself delayed by Ballestier. She called to Madeleine over the banisters:

"Do you mind waiting a moment? I am just taking Ballestier's temperature. You'd better not come up on account of the children. His throat is quite red this morning."

Madeleine sat down to wait in the parlour. It was a long, narrow room, with very little furniture and no bric-a-brac. A few scientific reviews, a paper-cutter and a gas-lamp stood on a table in the corner. There was an upright piano, several rocking-chairs, and a palm on a small mahogany stand draped with a piece of Liberty silk.

"Mr. Wallace is never here," Madeleine was thinking. "It must be lonely, although, busy as she is, Mrs. Wallace can't miss him as much as she would if she were a different sort of woman and not so reasonable. She thinks me very silly about Phillip——"

"Just a moment!" The voice came again over the banisters and was shortly followed by Mrs. Wallace herself.

"Are the children well?" she asked. "Fraulein doing nicely? I'm very much worried about Ballestier. They can't, of course, operate while he is so pulled down, and he seems to lose strength every day instead of gaining it."

She consulted a note-book, and without waiting for any comment from Madeleine she went on:

"It is so late we shall have time for only one 'case.' I suppose you are going to Mrs. Lemon's?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll begin with the worst. I don't really know whether we ought to do anything for this family I am going to visit. The husband is a good-for-nothing—one of those idle creatures who consider most work beneath their dignity. You never see a woman with such ideas; they'll take work when they are too weak to stand. The only thing this gentleman of leisure seems to succeed in is increasing the family. His poor wife has just had her *ninth!*"

It was bitterly cold. The snow had fallen during the night, and as the two women made their way through the poor part of the East Side it seemed to Madeleine as though the ugliness and dirt added to the piercing chilliness of the air. Even the snow was filthy.

Without announcing their visit, they climbed the dark, uneven stairs of a small tenement. A cheerful voice responded to their rap at the door and they went in.

"You see they're all here," Mrs. Wallace said to Madeleine in German, "as though nobody had anything to do."

They were all there, to be sure. It was in this room that the ninth had first seen the light of day.

He lay now, with his mother, on a bed which was pushed against the wall, back of the kitchen stove. Some of the children were playing on the floor, a girl of about eleven was washing dishes at the sink, and the father was busy in the window training an ivy plant which grew out of a soap-box.

The woman lifted herself on her arm, and in response to Mrs. Wallace's greeting she said:

"You don't find things in real good order when I'm not up to look after 'em."

She glanced over at her husband; her tired eyes rested affectionately on him.

"Give the ladies chairs, Jim," she said, and then she drew the blue bundle into her arms and sank back on the pillow.

Mrs. Wallace and Madeleine sat down. The man went back to his plant.

Mrs. Wallace took out a note-book.

"Has any one been here since my visit?"

"There was a lady in last Monday," the man answered—"a rather stout lady, who said she knew you. She brought something for the baby."

Without apparently paying attention, the child at the sink dried her hands and took from the bureau drawer a package, which she handed to Mrs. Wallace. It contained several baby garments.

Speaking again in German, Mrs. Wallace said to Madeleine:

"I recognise Mrs. Lemon's handiwork. She is kindness itself, but she does more harm than good

by giving to these cases before we have thoroughly investigated them."

To the man she said:

"Did the lady bring anything else?"

"She gave us a little help with the rent. She was in the day the baby was born, and she seen how my wife was a-worrying."

The woman's eyes travelled back and forth from Mrs. Wallace to her husband.

"My!" she said. "Her visit did do me good: I felt all cheered up."

Madeleine approached the bed and asked gently if she might take the baby in her arms. Mrs. Wallace went on with her investigations.

"How far behind are you with your rent?"

"About three months and a half," was the answer.

"Why aren't you working?"

"I'm a gardener," said the man. "In this season things is kind of slack."

"Well, but"—Mrs. Wallace's tone was indignant —"you can always find something to do in a place like New York. To-day, for example, you could have made half a dollar shovelling snow."

"I did go out this morning with my shovel, but they didn't offer me no half-dollar. Ten cents was all I could get, and I didn't see the use of takin' that."

Drawing her chair closer, she said in her most serious tone:

"How can you expect us to help you if you won't help yourself when the chance offers? Suppose I refused to come down here because it was too much trouble? Suppose the ladies of the committee refused to be bothered with cases of this sort?"

The man took little heed of her. He went on trimming the ivy.

"You must think somewhat of others," she said. "How do you suppose you are going to get your rent paid?"

At this question he looked up. His expression was searching. Did she intend to help them or had she come only to ask questions?

No light entered the room except through the window where the man was standing. By the door there was a closet with two beds in it, one under the other. The child at the sink, having finished her dish-washing, put a pot of tea on the stove and cut some slices of bread.

"You'll have a bite of something." The woman addressed herself to Madeleine. "You'll not go away without taking a drop of tea, anyway?"

She was about to accept, when Mrs. Wallace, who had heard the offer, answered for her:

"You'd much better keep the tea for your own lunch. We've breakfasted, and I'm sure we could neither of us feel hungry."

Madeleine had put the baby back on the bed by its mother's side with many compliments. It was the small, shrivelled infant of the poor.

Through further questioning Mrs. Wallace discovered that the two oldest children were at work, and that it was upon their earnings the family at present subsisted. She made a note of all this and then rose. The man's expression changed from inquiry to contempt. She was like the others; she had come only to ask questions.

It was to the woman that Mrs. Wallace now addressed herself.

"Is the baby well?"

"He's just lovely," the woman answered, turning his blue, wrinkled face to the light. "See him smile!" and she caught him back in her arms and rested his cheek against her own.

"It seems to me," the lady visitor continued, "that it would be as well to stop here. Nine is a very good number. Don't you think so?"

"If I could only have kept them all," said the woman. "I've lost two—my last two. They don't seem to have no strength. My first," she went on, her breath coming quicker with the effort of talking —"my first was the finest I ever see; but I love 'em all. Some chucks 'em out, but I wouldn't put one of mine in no ash-barrel."

She turned the baby again toward Mrs. Wallace.

"He's every bit as important to God as you or I."

"Well," said Mrs. Wallace, "if you think so you must try and take good care of him. I'll send one of the nurses down as soon as you're up; she'll show you how to pasteurise the baby's milk."

"I'm nursing him myself!" the woman exclaimed, frightened at the word nurse.

"There's no harm in that for the first few days, but he must learn to take the bottle from the beginning."

She made a further note of this, and as a parting message she said to the man:

"I don't think we can do anything for you at present, though we may be able to get you some work. There's a long waiting-list, and we can only take up the cases one by one. However, you are registered on the books, and if anything comes along I will let you know."

In an undertone Madeleine asked hurriedly:

"Couldn't I pay the rent? It would relieve the poor woman."

Mrs. Wallace shook her head violently and answered:

"I will explain why when we are outside."

This embarrassed Madeleine, and she took leave awkwardly of the poor family they had come to visit.

Once in the street Mrs. Wallace explained:

"You see, my dear, if you had paid the rent it might have relieved the woman, that I grant you, but it would have been encouraging idleness in the man. We are simply bothered to death by this very sort of case—the victims of sentimental charity. Until we get them weeded out it is hard for us to be just to the deserving poor. You see only one

family, but we have hundreds and hundreds on our lists, and we try not to apply any principle to the individual which could not hold good for the multitude. That is the advantage of organising charity, instead of leaving it to the caprice of separate persons who are generally quite immoral in the way they give."

"But that woman looked so worn!"

"You think only of her—you have a sentimental impulse instead of having a scientific method. If you had relieved her anxiety to-day, you would have been preparing greater anxiety for her in the future."

Madeleine was meditative.

"I suppose," she said, "it would be a bad thing to encourage idleness."

"I advise you not to discuss the matter with Mrs. Lemon if you are going there now. She would only get you mixed up in your ideas. I'm sorry I can't be with you. You'll explain to her about Ballestier?"

At Mrs. Lemon's Madeleine found only Grace Westervelt and Mrs. Phipps-Brown.

"We're reduced to three," Mrs. Lemon laughed when Madeleine had given Mrs. Wallace's excuses. Martha Sheffield is really very ill, and Mary Evans wrote me a letter to-day saying that she could no longer conscientiously come to the sewing-class, as she did not approve of my methods of philanthropy."

"What's the matter with Martha Sheffield?" Madeleine asked.

"She seems to be on the verge of nervous prostration. The doctor keeps her in a dark room."

"In a dark room!" cried Grace. "I should think that would be enough to give any one nervous prostration!"

Mrs. Phipps-Brown had come in at the same time as Madeleine.

"I'm awfully late, I know," she said. "I've been arranging with Bobby for a coaching party down to the Country Club for over Sunday. It's perfectly crazy to go in weather like this, but I promised to tell you and Mrs. Dillon that you were to make no engagements. The Penfolds are going, and my husband, of course. Poor Jack! He hates coaching. Bobby wanted you, Mrs. Lemon, but I assured him that there was no use in even asking —that you never left Mr. Lemon. Wasn't I right?"

"Yes, dear."

"Bobby's got a bully new four; he's going to try them for the first time going down on Saturday."

Madeleine was turning over in her mind the possibilities of leaving the children. Certainly if the baby's cold was no better she could not go, yet she did not want to give it up; she had never been on a coach, not even to the college games. Of course she would not dream of trusting the Irish nurse, but with Fraulein the babies were as safe as though she were there herself.

There was a rap at the door; the maid opened it and asked Mrs. Lemon if Mr. Lemon could come down and sit with the ladies.

"How very improper!" Mrs. Lemon laughed.

It was Grace who said:

"Do let him come! You know I love your husband!"

And Lemon came. Leaning on a stick, he walked with difficulty, but his shoulders were erect. About his throat a silk handkerchief was knotted loosely, his smoking-jacket was of velvet, and above it rose his head, fine and handsome, worn by fatigue and illness, but with beauty of line and with youth in the eyes.

Mr. Lemon had been a *bon viveur* in his day. He was known as a "ladies' man." Too indifferent to money to enter into the business vortex, too fond of life to give himself up to scientific researches, he had fallen between two categories of men; and not being really attached to either, he had devoted himself to women. The woman of his own generation he knew thoroughly; he had captivated more than one, and even now, infirm, he held the heart and affections of his wife. But the modern woman—the new girl was a mystery to him. She grew up side by side with the boys, danced, flirted, amused herself, and when the marrying time came seemed to be thinking more of herself than of another. As for elopements and the sentimental attachments which had sometimes

carried away young heads in his day, even the most juvenile would have laughed at them in a skeptical manner. What had become of the ardour that made his youth worth living? Into what channels had drifted the charm which made men commit any folly for a woman? What thoughts had driven romance out of minds like that of Miss Evans; and stranger still, how could the girls of Grace Westervelt's beauty and vivacity have such control of themselves that they passed coldly by love's very flame?

He enjoyed talking with Mrs. Lemon's friends, and in his suffering at being an invalid it was a secret consolation to him to feel that these apparently heartless young women would have been touched if he could have appeared before them as he had been fifteen years ago, with his delicate knowledge of feminine psychology. This impatience at the stupidity of the modern young man in all sentimental matters partially reconciled him to his illness. At least for the time being there were no rivals in the field—none who made him regret with anguish his gray hairs. Madeleine, whom he had not met before, was presented to him, but it was between Mrs. Phipps-Brown and Grace Westervelt that he sat down.

"Always for the poor?" he asked, lifting one of the nondescript garments on which the women were at work. "The poor seem to have an anatomy peculiar to themselves. What able-bodied man,

woman or child could get into a thing like that?" and the shapeless flannels he dangled in the air.

"Don't make fun of my sewing," said Grace. "I'm improving wonderfully. I couldn't have done half as well as that at the beginning of winter."

Madeleine was amused.

"You can't dance all night, automobile all day, and have a very steady hand for sewing, Mr. Lemon, you know," said Grace, smiling.

"Which is the best?" he asked, wanting to hear her on the subjects which called forth her enthusiasm.

"Oh, automobiling!" she cried. "It makes you forget everything—which is a great advantage; and then it is so deliciously dangerous. We went sixty miles an hour yesterday and didn't kill anything. It really is a sport."

"And supposing you had killed something?"

"I had two such willing victims with me! I am sure either one of them would willingly die for me!"

She delighted in speaking thus flippantly of the two boys who had devoted their winter to her.

"That's part of the sport?" Lemon asked. "I don't suppose love itself will be able to resist the violence of modern life. Cupid is replaced in the automobile by a small demon who mocks at the flutterings of the human heart; they are drowned, as it were, by the din of machinery!"

"They are always drowned, sooner or later, by something," Mrs. Phipps-Brown commented; "it

really might as well be by machinery as anything else."

Inevitably, in the presence of Lemon, they were drifting toward questions of sentiment. Though he felt sure human nature could not have changed since his day, he liked to study its recent perversity.

"But is it really machinery, Miss Grace, that drowns the heart-flutterings of your two 'willing victims'?"

"I don't know anything about their hearts," she said; "that would be too much of a responsibility. Love is not the beginning of intimacy—it is the end of it. If these boys were in love with me," she continued, almost indignantly, "I simply should have to give up seeing them."

"Of course," Lemon mused dreamily; "there is the invention of marriage, whereby an intimacy may be prolonged without anybody's being compromised."

"But you can't," Grace was laughing. "You can't very well marry two people at once! When one of my two bores me I have the other. I am not responsible for either of them; they are always charming because they never know exactly how I am going to treat them. I get my own way, and I am free. I have everything I want in the world, and my affections are not so bound up that anybody can make me suffer. Could you imagine a better arrangement than that?"

"Wait, wait, wait," he said, tapping his stick

against the boot of his lame leg. He was thinking back again to the days when he could so adroitly have stormed the citadel behind which this rebel's heart was hid: "She would be almost the easiest kind to master. She is tired already of her own will. She's running wild for the lack of a keeper. She is going to do harm to herself and to others, and the fault is not hers, but that of the weary, over-stimulated modern youth!"

"Women are very adaptable," he said aloud. "They have had liberty thrust upon them by their busy husbands and they make the most of it, but they never would have chosen it. In reality, they don't like it one bit better than the slave enjoys the loneliness and responsibility of his freedom."

Madeleine, examining the simple tenets of her own obedience, her dependence on Phillip, felt that she was more of a child, with all her experience of wifehood and motherhood, than Grace Westervelt, who had had time to think things out for herself.

CHAPTER XIV

The Phipps-Browns

"He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent."
—*Proverbs.*

The Phipps-Browns occupied a large house which had been designed for them by an architect recently returned with a Beaux-Arts diploma from Paris. New York had been somewhat awed by the Louis XIII. *façade* behind which Mrs. Phipps-Brown received in vast and lonely apartments. This pretentious mansion had less the air of a deserted palace than of a hotel in the off season. The walls were hung with tapestries; the drawing-rooms and boudoirs were furnished with veritable museum pieces; the glass doors of the vitrines reflected treasures of bric-a-brac for which merchant princes had bid untold sums at auctions in foreign lands.

The Phipps-Brown legend concerning their possessions did not go back as far even as these picturesque sales in the *chateaux* of reduced noblemen. The stories which the rich New York stock-broker had to tell about his belongings began with difficulties at the custom-house, lawsuits with decorators, disputes with bric-a-brac merchants, discussions of all sorts regarding price and delivery of what he called the "goods."

"Money," he said to his friends, in making an exhibition tour of the house—"money! Why, the price I paid for these things is nothing to the d——d worry they cost me! I advise anybody who's building a home to fill it with good American stuff." He glanced back of him guiltily as he evinced this heartfelt sentiment, and added: "It's lucky my wife didn't hear me. She don't think a thing's worth giving house-room unless it's crossed at least one ocean and belonged some time or other to a duke or a marquis!"

Thus the house was something less than a museum to those who visited it; to Phipps-Brown it had all the inconveniences of the club and none of its compensations; to his wife it seemed a place too good for the little people she knew, and a ridiculous attempt at the real thing when she compared it to the habitations of the great social magnates.

To nobody was it a home.

Under its imitation Louis XIII. roof it sheltered two beings whose contact was no closer than with the French King himself. Between them was as heterogeneous a collection of prejudices and weaknesses, brought pell-mell together without breeding or tradition, as there was a motley assembling of sofas and chairs collected with no controlling sentiment. The sofas and chairs were there because they had cost money; Mrs. Brown was also there because she had cost money; and Phipps-Brown was there because he had the money to

pay for them. If she had economised for him he would have thought her a trifle second-class; she cost him so dear he felt sure he had made no mistake. He was an invalid from overwork, a sufferer from chronic nervous dyspepsia, his nerves were shattered, and yet she wanted another row of pearls and an addition to the country house!

"I tell you," he leered through his tobacco-stained teeth, with the half-mortified, half-vain manner of the millionaire husband, "I tell you she keeps me busy. I wouldn't be where I am now if it hadn't been for her whims."

This was in the first year of their marriage.

With time, he found the harness into which she had driven him a heavy one to bear. He dared not falter. He had traversed a moment when his heart grew rebellious; his weary brain and body cried out for a reward. Then the fight for existence and a fortune engrossed him. Daily he left some of his life energy in the struggle; daily he diminished; daily his instincts as a financier sharpened; daily his sensitiveness as a man, his kinship toward his fellow men decreased. What had once brought tears to his eyes now curled his lip in the scorn of one whom nobody can outdo. His compassion was replaced by a cruel mistrust. His weakened physical forces were replenished by whisky.

Phipps-Brown sat in his "den," as it pleased his wife to call the only room where her husband felt at home. He had on evening clothes, a dinner



coat, a black cravat. Against the white expanse of shirt-front his thin face appeared very red; his mustache was thick, stiff, and almost as red as his face; he sat with his legs crossed, his neck thrust deep into his collar, one elbow on the chair-arm, and in that hand a lighted cigarette. On the other arm of the chair, which was flat like a miniature table, there was a glass half full of whisky and soda. He sipped and smoked, and behind the veil of vanishing tobacco there was a veil which hung over Phipps-Brown's eyes. Through it he saw a world wherein nothing counted much which had not the glittering envelope of gold.

He sipped and smoked, his foot swinging lazily. The door opened, and he turned deliberately, at the same time carrying the half-empty glass to his lips.

"Well?" he said to his wife, who came in in ball dress.

"Well," she said, "nothing, except that I am going to the Westervelts' musicale, that I won't see you again until to-morrow night at dinner, and that these bills have simply got to be paid within the next twenty-four hours."

She deposited a pile of papers on the table and, approaching the fire, continued to mold into her suede gloves her arms and wrists.

He extended her the hand in which he held the lighted cigarette.

"Come," he said, "and I am to have nothing in

return? There's a good thousand owing"—he tossed the cigarette into the fire and made a slight move toward her—"more than that; two, perhaps. Aren't they worth a kiss for the banker?"

"You know I can't kiss you," she answered, drawing away from him. "I am dressed, and it would muss me up."

He looked at her somewhat sharply.

"And supposing," he said, "I should refuse to pay these bills? That would muss you up a trifle, too, wouldn't it?"

She glanced at the glass half full of whisky and then at her husband.

"It's not the first time this month you've overdrawn your account," he said. "Supposing——"

She approached his chair and, bending over him so that it seemed as though she were in the same moment drawing away her skirts, she placed a kiss on his forehead.

"That's not fair game," he said, softening his tone. "If I don't get my kiss now I shall wait for it until you come home."

"But you haven't kept to your part of the bargain," she cried, returning to the table and lifting the bunch of bills in her fingers. "Give me my check first."

The man got himself out of the chair, carrying the glass of spirits with him; he settled himself before the pen, ink and check-book, gave a low whistle, wrote the figures with a five in front of the three

zeros, blotted the leaf, put down his pen, and then took from a seeming victim his reward.

She shook herself free, adjusted the diamond ornament in her hair, and from the door she called back to him:

"I forgot to tell you that we are going to-morrow afternoon to the Country Club for over Sunday. Bobby will drive us out four, even if it snows. Little Mrs. Dillon is invited, the Penfolds, Grace, of course, and the two youths she has in tow at present. I've told Jameson to pack your things and take the early train so as to be there before we are. I meant to speak of it to you at dinner. Good night."

The man turned listlessly to the bills which his wife had left on the table, taking with her only the check.

"Five thousand!" he repeated. "What has she put that much into since the last allowance?"

There was an account at the florist's for $150; a bill of $200 for slippers; there were items for dresses he had never seen her wear; there were three monthly accounts from the masseuse, the manicure, and the hair-dresser for $3 a day each; there was a bill for books, a large debt for overcalls on the telephone, an important livery stable account, a modest rendering from the veterinary.

He added these up with the rest. There lacked $400 to make the $5,000 balance. He was not puzzled to know where they had gone, but a trifle

surprised that his wife had said nothing about them.

"Bridge," he murmured. "Four hundred at bridge, and she didn't see fit to mention it! She guessed I'd pay the bills without looking at them. I generally do. Well, after all,"—he drew a pencil from his pocket and began figuring; it was a small red pencil well worn, and so short that it scarcely held between his thumb and forefinger; his desk was full of gold and silver and even jewelled contrivances for writing, but this red stump was his mascot: he used it in times of anxiety, when the market was playing tricks; he looked to it for some magic virtue whereby, in spite of facts, it would bring the credit out with a longer string of zeros than the debit—"well, after all," he argued to the little pencil-end, "she's not such a heavy loser—four hundred all told. I wonder what she would have done if she had known that I lost four hundred thousand on a single slump to-day, and double that much yesterday?"

The butler, without waiting for directions, brought a tray with a fresh glass and bottles. He placed them within reach, and Phipps-Brown again dropped into the delicious haze of tobacco-smoke and alcohol.

CHAPTER XV

The Coaching Party

"Patience and shuffle the cards."—Cervantes.

The coaching party had been under way for an hour.

Madeleine, perched on the box seat beside Bobby, was wondering whether Phillip approved of coaches. It seemed so ostentatious to go rattling through the air over the heads of the poor country people, who watched them in amazement as they passed. She had never discussed the matter with her husband, but she felt sure that he would not want a coach for the Moorlands, and this feeling kept her a trifle uncomfortable.

Bobby was in high spirits.

"Mrs. Phipps-Brown," he said to her, "told me that you thought something of not coming on account of one of your children being sick, or something of the sort."

"Oh, no!" Madeleine protested. "Both of my children are perfectly well. I wouldn't have come, of course, if they hadn't been. But this is the first time since they were born that I have ever left them for overnight."

He laughed heartily at this:

"You're one of those old-fashioned rock-me-to-sleep kind of mothers, are you? You don't mean to say that you'd let a small-sized kid interfere with your pleasure? Why," he went on, "half the fun of this party is driving you down by my side and showing you the club. It was entirely my own idea—this expedition. Everybody said I couldn't make a success of it, and it's going to be simply immense."

With an imperceptible gallantry in his manner he repeated:

"I especially wanted to show it to you, Mrs. Dillon."

The touch of personal interest on his part made Madeleine in an instant forget her hostility at what he had said about children. Why did he especially want to show the place to her? Had he, then, thought of her since the momentary conversation they had had at Mrs. Phipps-Brown's the preceding Sunday?

"I'd like your advice about a certain matter," he went on, choosing his moment to reëngage in conversation at the time when they were making a difficult turning.

"You're not timid, are you?" he asked, seeing the colour flash into Madeleine's cheeks.

"Oh, no," she cried. "It pleases me to see how well you drive."

Bobby turned his head, saw that the others were chattering, and then went on:

"We've built a new billiard-room at the club. It's used for everything except billiards, of course—nobody but professionals plays billiards any more—but I've got to put curtains of some sort in the place, and a lot of things. Perhaps you'll have a look and give me the benefit of your taste—I know it's good; Mrs. Wallace told me so. What a fiend that woman is, by the way. I call her the microbe-chaser. I'd rather have almost any kind of a microbe than hear her tell about them. But perhaps you're a convert? There's no danger of them here, anyway—not in this fresh air. Isn't it great? Aren't you glad you left the kids and came with us?"

Madeleine hardly knew what to make of this person who changed from child to man before she had time to answer either. His flippant manner rather annoyed her, and as soon as he was personal she wished he would be flippant again.

"If you hadn't come I'd have made some excuse and given up the party. I've trundled these same people out here behind four horses times innumerable. I know every stone in the road, but I've never come down here in winter. This trip is for your special benefit. Hello, there!" he cried. "A flake of snow! Isn't this immense?"

The frozen crystals fell more and more rapidly as they ran on over the country fields. Fast the gray winter lines were covered with white; the road lay before them an immaculate streamer, and into

it the hoofs of the four beasts went with muffled rhythm. Like petals, the flakes caught in the leafless branches of the trees. As a mantle they enveloped the smaller bushes, and still from the trembling skies the snow-clouds scattered their burden.

"Oh, I say," cried Mrs. Phipps-Brown, glad of any pretext to disturb the equilibrium of the party, in which she did not have her accustomed seat by the driver—"I say, this is too much! Bobby, the fly-trap would be better than this."

"Do you really want to get inside?" he asked, looking from those on the back seat to the woman by his side.

"Yes, of course we do," a chorus answered.

To Madeleine he repeated his question.

"I think I'll stay here," she said. "I love the snow. I'm used to it, you know, living in the country."

"You're a bully little sport!" he said to her when the others had disappeared into the "fly-trap" below.

Again Madeleine was somewhat embarrassed by the impetuous frankness of this man, who provoked momentarily in her a sentiment which she knew was not sincere.

Bobby was seemingly a brute. He certainly knew more about horses than men. He had lived by choice among that class of half-outlaws who alternate between meannesses accomplished for lucre and sudden flights of heroism which no money

could buy. Any man who hadn't this mixture of the best and the worst in him was, according to Bobby, a mongrel not worth bothering over. Women were like horses and men; there was a price that fetched them down. Old Mr. Southerland had brought up his son to believe, first, that the only way to own a thing is to pay for it, and, second, that anything a man is likely to want he can get for money.

Bobby kept one hand over his pocket-book and the other hand free for sport.

"Play and pay" was the formula into which he had contracted his life principles. He had a stomach and sense of humour, which he considered a great improvement on having a heart. His motto for all dealings with his fellow men was: "Use, or you will be used."

Mrs. Phipps-Brown had come as an exception to his rules. He had devoted himself to her for over a year without making any headway. Almost at once she had received him intimately at the house, confided to him their exact financial situation, sent for him when she was depressed, made use of him when she was gay, let him follow her when she left town in the summer, accepted everything and given nothing. He was not in the least her victim—not the small fish kept dangling at the end of the line. He had swallowed no bait whatever; he knew perfectly what he was doing. If he was unaccustomed to being refused it was partly

because he bided his time in asking for what he wanted. Bobby had no idea of making love to Mrs. Phipps-Brown, but he intended that she should be his.

The preceding day he had been on the Exchange. He knew that Phipps-Brown was a ruined man unless some miracle were enacted. Three important houses had already gone to pieces during the week. Phipps-Brown was a wreck from overdrinking. He could never again get his hold. He was shortly to be in need of a friend—in sore need, and his wife was perhaps to feel even more sorely that some one must save them from the disgrace of failure and poverty.

It was at this moment that Bobby had chosen to plan a coaching party for Madeleine. She was a simple little person, desperately in love with her husband; there could be no risk in paying her a slight bit of attention until Mrs. Phipps was roused.

Madeleine, as they drove on through the storm, glanced occasionally at her companion; he was good-looking, tall, broad-shouldered, and young—years younger than Phillip, she thought. His face had a freshness and vigour; it wore only the marks of healthy natural instincts—none of the lines which come with reflection over matters that, after all, no one would bother with if they were not thrust upon him by temperament or circumstances.

Alone with this man on the coach-top, Madeleine, for the first time since her husband's departure,

seemed to be living in the present. She was released momentarily from her habitual wavering between a past when she and Phillip had been together and a future when she and Phillip would be together again. Now, agreeably exhilarated by the gentle lashing of the snow against her eyes, small and comfortable by the side of this big man who had planned an entire expedition so that he might be with her, she became gradually part of the present, in which there was no Phillip. When they talked her thoughts went back to the realities of life, but so long as they swung on silent through the crisp winter air there was an intensity of feeling as in a dream when the memory sleeps.

"The wind's blowing up fairly sharp," said Bobby. "Are you sure you don't mind it?"

"Oh, no," Madeleine answered. "I enjoy nothing so much as the winter air."

"It is great, isn't it?"

As he said this a sudden gust caught the boa which encircled Madeleine's throat and blew it vigorously across the young man's face. They both made an attempt to catch it before it should be carried away. There was a moment when their shoulders, their arms were in close contact; a moment when Madeleine forgot the boa, forgot everything—and it was with a little gasp that she recovered the fur and resumed her former position. She was relieved a few minutes later when Bobby called out:

"Here we are! There's the club! Isn't it a bully little club? Isn't it immense?"

In the hall of the club a bright fire was burning, and the party assembled around it, while Bobby disappeared to discuss the question of rooms and food with the director.

"Didn't you enjoy the drive out immensely?" Madeleine asked Mrs. Penfold, who stood next her, warming her toes by the blazing logs.

"I can't say," was the answer, "that it was the most delightful morning I ever passed. We were boxed up something like sardines."

"Yes, Bobby," Mrs. Phipps-Brown exclaimed to the returning host, "you will have to make up to us in some way for the horrors of your winter house-party so far. It was perfectly absurd, this idea of dragging people out of their comfortable homes in a blizzard!"

"Ask Mrs. Dillon what she thinks about winter coaching!" Bobby cried.

And Madeleine was crimson as she answered:

"I enjoyed every minute of the trip down!"

"I vote," chimed in rather mildly Mr. Phipps-Brown, "that we have something to eat and something to drink before pronouncing definitely on the merits of the club in midwinter."

"Nothing's more simple," was Bobby's response. "Lunch has been ready for ten minutes."

"Where's Grace Westervelt?" somebody asked, and Mrs. Phipps-Brown answered for her:

"She's gone on an exploring expedition with the 'twins.' They were trying to find a boy to sweep off the pond so they could have some skating this afternoon."

"So much the worse for them if there is nothing left to eat when they get back."

Bobby led the way to the upper floor. The club was small. The bedrooms opened upon a corridor.

"I put you three women together in these three end rooms," he explained. "Penfold, you are here, next to your wife; Miss Westervelt is next to Mrs. Penfold, then Mrs. Dillon, then Mrs. Phipps-Brown. You," he said to Phipps-Brown, "and the twins are on the floor above."

Madeleine, bewildered at this general dispersing of husbands and wives, waited to see what room Bobby would allot himself.

"Don't you want to have a look at my apartments?" he asked, as though divining her thoughts. "Not now, for we're all too ravenously hungry; but at tea time. I'm president of this affair, you know. I'm the founder, and for some time I was the only member, so they put me up in a sumptuous suite."

The sumptuous suite was at the end of the same corridor where the women of the party were to sleep.

While Madeleine was getting ready for lunch, alone for the first time since they had left the house, her thoughts went with a rush back to the children.

They had already had their noon meal; it was the hour when they rested. Half undressed they tumbled into their cribs, and without troubling to shake themselves into a comfortable position they dropped off, as they were, to slumberland. When they woke, an hour later, their brows damp, their cheeks flushed, they looked first for their mother before they began their usual chattering. Madeleine had a tight feeling in her throat, but she was too excited to cry, and it is not at all certain that she would have chosen, had it been possible, to be home at that moment. Some one rapped at the door. She took a handkerchief from her bag, gave a last hasty glance in the mirror, and went to join the others. This day had the charm for her of the unknown. For so many years she had lived at the Moorlands in the routine of habits which never varied from one month's end to the other! She was half delighted now, half miserable—above all, she was not herself.

During lunch a telephone call was announced for Phipps-Brown.

"Poor thing," his wife said as he hurried down a mouthful; "they can't even leave you alone on Sunday. Why did you tell them where they could find you? I left word at the house that if any one ——"

While she talked on Phipps-Brown had already gone into the next room to resume over the wires a conversation that interested him more than that

of his wife. They could hear from the dining-room his answers, short, sharp, without change of tone.

"Impossible? But it must be done before the market opens to-morrow. He said he couldn't? Did you try Beckman? Fool. No wonder! I'll take an afternoon train back. Be at the house by five."

They could hear, but from the dining-room they could not see the man, who put both arms down on the telephone box and sobbed like a child.

Phipps-Brown did not return to the table. The meal was about over, and the party moved shortly into the hall, where cigars and liqueurs were brought to them.

Grace, in a short skirt which well became her boyish figure, started at once with her skates over her arm, her twins in tow, for the pond, eager to lose not a moment of the short afternoon sunlight. Penfold expressed his intention of climbing to the hills back of the club, with his paint-box, to get a "snow effect." As Bobby and Mrs. Phipps-Brown seemed to have taken possession of the sitting-room, Mrs. Penfold proposed to Madeleine that they should go to their rooms and have a talk until tea time.

"Wouldn't you rather take a walk?" Madeleine asked. "The country must be beautiful in the snow."

"I'm not a bit of a sport," Mrs. Penfold said. "I didn't even bring a pair of heavy boots or a short skirt. But don't let me keep you in."

"Really, don't you mind if I go for a little turn and join you later?"

"Not at all. I ought to rest. You'll find me in my room when you come back."

Bobby had installed Mrs. Phipps-Brown in the window-seat of the billiard-room, with a pile of cushions around her so that she should feel no drafts, and a rug over her knees.

"It's as bad as the steamer," she said. "But you don't expect me to sit here all the afternoon and do nothing, do you? You must invent a diversion of some kind."

"What do you say to bezique?"

"I hate it."

"And piquet?"

"Not so bad, if you'll play high enough stakes."

Bobby got ready the table and cards.

"Didn't Phipps-Brown," the woman asked, "say that he was going back to town to-day, or did I imagine it?"

"I think he telephoned something of the kind, and he sent down for Jameson to pack his things again and be ready to leave with him."

"What do you suppose has got into him? Can't he even take Sundays off? I suppose I ought to go up," she reflected uninterestedly, slowly dealing a fresh hand and not moving from the window-seat.

They played the game in French. It was a pose on the part of Mrs. Phipps-Brown, who would not

allow Bobby to use the English terms. She announced, being first:

"*Quatrieme au valet.*"

"Not good! But *combien de cartes?*"

"Oh, I hate this game," she said; "there's so much counting. *J'ai six cartes. Elles valent quarante et un.*"

"Good!"

While they continued their calculations, Phipps-Brown came in. His face was pale and serious. He looked more of a man than perhaps he had for years.

"I find," he said, "that I shall have to go back to town. I'm awfully sorry to disturb the party, but it can't be helped. You'll be home to-morrow, I suppose?" He addressed his wife, taking this way of saying good-by to her. He kissed her cheek, and held out his hand to Bobby, who had risen.

"I'd like to have a word with you," Bobby answered, and to Mrs. Phipps-Brown he added: "You'll excuse us a moment."

It was the time to put in his wedge. He found Phipps-Brown more master of himself than he expected. He learned, however, what he wanted to know—that all attempts to raise money had failed, and that the firm would go under the following day for certain.

When he came back to the billiard-room his cards were dealt and his opponent was more impatient than ever.

"Shall I tell her now?" he thought. "And how shall I put it? Apparently she knows nothing."

"Bobby!" Mrs. Phipps-Brown cried, "pay attention! What are you thinking about?"

"I'm thinking about you," he answered bluntly. "How much of a place do you suppose I hold in your life?"

"Oh, Bobby," she said in a pleading tone, "don't get sentimental. *J'ai quatre as et un cinquieme majeur.*"

The expression on Mrs. Phipps-Brown's face was rather scornful. She had not yet forgiven Bobby for the arrangement he had made coming down on the coach. As though his thoughts were following the same channel as hers, he said:

"Why do you suppose I put Mrs. Dillon next to me to-day?"

"But why not?" was her answer. "Why shouldn't you?"

Bobby did not respond to her question, but for a time pretended to be absorbed in the game. Then, as they had played out a hand, he threw down his cards.

"Enough already?" she asked. "You are not a very willing loser."

But the man had something else on his mind. What her sentiments were for Phipps-Brown he had determined to find out before going any further in his plan.

"Your husband——" he began.

Mrs. Phipps-Brown lifted her eyes. There was a mixture in them of disgust and merriment.

"You're not going to talk to me about Jack, are you?"

"Where did you first meet Phipps-Brown?" Bobby continued.

"What a ridiculous question! Why go back to such ancient history? I met Phipps-Brown the first time at a college commencement. He was the most popular man in his class. His sister was my best friend at school. He was very good-looking then, though you can hardly believe it now. The Phipps-Browns were rich, and Jack had as fair prospects at starting out in the world as most young men."

Like women in general, though she had protested, she became quickly absorbed in telling about her own past.

"My family, you know, was very poor at that time. My father, having failed once, had become the unsuccessful man who is always trying to inaugurate an invention of some sort without capital back of him. I hated poverty—I hate it now. That's one reason I've never wanted to have children. My own life was made so miserable as a child! Nobody can ever be sure of a stock-broker's fortune. My father was rich when he married. I should never expose a child to the sudden ruin we had to endure. I remember the day my father failed. I was thirteen. My mother was

prostrated and unable to do anything. An aunt of hers came to take care of us. That morning when I was dressed she asked me if I wanted to go to school. In a very solemn voice she said: 'Your father has been obliged to suspend his business. Perhaps you would rather not go to school to-day?' 'It's not a disgrace, is it?' I asked, not understanding her question. I never saw my father except for a moment in the morning and again just before I went to bed. So it could not be for him that they wanted me to stay at home. 'Is it a disgrace?' I repeated. 'Oh, no,' she said. 'It is a perfectly honourable failure. The house will pay all their debts in time.' I went to school. I had never thought of money before. It was never spoken of at home even when we were poorest and had to give up horses, carriages, servants, and all the rest. But I learned that day that you can't give up such things without giving up, not exactly the esteem of the people you know, but their genuine consideration. That first day at school changed me from a child into a worldly woman. The whole horizon of miserable lies upon which is based a society where money is everything revealed itself to me. If I had come back to my classes with some disease the girls' treatment of me would have been no different. There was some pity in it, some curiosity. But the feeling which controlled was that the less they had to do with me the better. If I had been very clever, or if anybody had taken

the trouble to explain things to me, I might have turned out differently."

She laughed at Bobby.

"As it was, I hated my destiny with a bitterness that was almost vicious, because I was poor. Money was the only thing worth having. I could buy back the position I had lost; I could do with people what I pleased if I had money. Poor, I was impotent; rich, I should have power. It mattered little what I became myself if only there were gold—plenty of gold—between me and the world. I could not have a return of that first attack of life, of the malady, the moral suffering of poverty. You see how I live? I go from one thing to the other that costs money. I have nothing in my life that hasn't been bought. I am dissipated, debauched by money—but I can't do without it. I only tolerate my husband," she added slowly, "because he lets me do as I please, and because his money is as necessary to me as morphine to the opium-eater. Thank God"—she spoke the words bitterly between her teeth—"we have no children! Money is the only tie between us."

And after a moment's silence, in which her thoughts did not change, she said abruptly:

"Bobby, for Heaven's sake, you look positively moved!"

Bobby stared at her long and fixedly and the words he had so long in mind came mechanically to his lips.

"Do you know," he said, "that your husband is a ruined man?"

She caught her breath with a nervous movement which ended in a laugh:

"What a poor joke!" she said. "Didn't what I have just been saying sound sincere? It came more nearly from my heart than anything I've ever said to you. Did you have to put it to this test to see whether I really meant it?"

He bent one of the cards back and forth in his hands.

"I don't know how sincere you may have been," was all he said, "but what I tell you is a fact. There was a slump on Friday which shook Phipps-Brown & Company to the very depths. They may hang on two days more, it may be three, but they can't possibly recoup. It is utterly impossible."

Her laugh had become hysterical. She pulled her rings off and slipped them back and forth from one finger to the other.

"Bobby! It isn't true! It can't be! Jack would have said something about it. Ruined! Why, it's too hideous to even contemplate! A failure, an honourable failure, and all the shame and misery of that first day at school to begin again?"

As she grew more and more excited Bobby became more calm, more deliberate. If he lost his head he might do some foolish act of weakness and forfeit his plan.

"Do you mean to say that in a few days we shall be penniless?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Yes!" she repeated, her eyes fixed on his—fixed on all the past she had sacrificed for this prize which was to slip from her, this golden screen which was to pass into the possession of others, leaving her exposed to the world, powerless. Her slender hands went through her hair as though some sharp pain carried them to her head.

"Oh!" she cried, "oh, no!"

And she fell forward on the table, her tears gliding over the smoothly polished cards.

Bobby let her cry for some time.

In her thoughts she was resuming, one by one, the daily rounds which made up her life. Everywhere it would be the same—some pity, some curiosity. She would have no prestige; her spirit would be broken. She would be a slave, a miserable slave, an opium fiend without morphine. She could see the expression of the different women who had envied her as they learned that her husband was ruined; she could note their change of attitude toward her at the first meeting. They would be sorry for her husband. Her husband! She thought of him for the first time. Phipps-Brown poor! Phipps-Brown unsuccessful, in debt, perhaps! Phipps-Brown, dull with too much drinking, thrust with her into the intimacy of a life without money!

"I would rather——" she looked at Bobby.

"How can you be so indifferent?" she cried. "Don't you see that my life is ended? Do you suppose I can stay here and live perhaps in an apartment on the West Side—Heaven knows what!—one servant to wait on us—on us!—on him and me?"

The man's continued silence thoroughly exasperated her in this excruciating moment and she became reckless. She even exaggerated her disloyalty in order to rouse from his tranquillity this free, heartless youth before her.

"It means nothing to you. You can't even imagine it! But I know all the horrors of having to economise, all the curse of debts, of other people's debts. Ah!" the word was spoken like an oath. "Ah! Already you see I have no more influence. I can't even stir you. You were my friend, my best friend, and you have nothing to say! You are like the girls at school. The less you have now to do with me the better! I suppose you are sorry for Phipps-Brown, too? Pity him! He merits it! He has lost his money!"

She laughed hoarsely.

"His power is gone! I am sorry for him, too—oh, very sorry! Do you see us spending our evenings over an account-book? Thank God we have no children!" she said again. "If only that they may be spared the disappointment of seeing how a friend —how you, Bobby, can act when our tide of luck is turning."

Bobby felt that the moment for which he had been waiting was come.

"Why do you take it for granted that I shall abandon you?" he asked. "Have I said anything to that effect? Is it not you who have made all the remarks about how I feel and what I am going to do?"

His question caused a sudden transformation in her expression. With a coquetry she had never showed before to this man who for a year had spent with her most of his time she laid her hand gently on his arm and, her face close to his, said:

"Then it's not true, Bobby? You won't abandon us?"

Bobby leaned over, kissed her hand, rose and walked several times up and down the room. Her eyes followed him; her head she leaned against her arms, which were folded on the cushions back of her. She rested as a small ship upon troubled waters when the wind has turned and the harbour lights are in sight.

It was Bobby now who was shaken by the storm. Passionate, excited, with an intensity of which she had believed him incapable, he took his place beside her. If by his words he meant to stir her, his eyes sought also to communicate some of their owner's purpose; they did not for a moment leave her while he said what he had to say.

His voice was deep and he spoke hurriedly.

"You know that everything I have is yours, to

dispose of as you will. Nothing would seem a sacrifice which helped you out of this distress. Don't answer," he said as she leaned forward to speak. "Wait until I have finished. I know what is in your mind; there is nothing I can do for you; material aid would only make matters worse; a man cannot give a woman the protection of his fortune unless at the same time he offers her his name. It is to your husband that I offer all the succour that money can bring. It is to you that I offer my name. Don't give me your answer now," he continued. "Anything you decided would be too hasty. You know how easy it would be to obtain a release from Phipps-Brown—his habits—you understand what I mean. I don't need to insist. The only wonder is that you have stood it as long as you have. I will pay all of Phipps-Brown's debts, I will assume his responsibilities, and I will take him as partner into the Southerland Company. I am not a stock-broker; there is some stability in the Southerland millions; I have an income of $200,000; it will not change, except to be doubled at my father's death. It is yours if you will do what I ask. You have just said that between you and the man whose name you bear there are no ties but money. This sudden failure leaves you free. Free!" he insisted. "Does it not leave you free? I don't ask you; I answer for you. You shall be my wife—you shall be my wife!"

He made no attempt to touch her, but rose again

and began to pace up and down the long half-furnished room.

She watched him as the poor, helpless creature in a cage watches the man of authority who brings food and punishment. She weighed in the balance the life of her husband abandoned by her and sustained in his business as against his life if she stayed with him and they were both poor. She caught sight of her past, of all her past, as one does when the mind is under a sudden strain. It seemed to her that the only crises in her existence, the only decisions she had been obliged to make, the only scenes that had told upon her character, had been determined by the importance of money. It was too late to adopt another way of thinking. She knew as well as Bobby, when she first grasped his meaning, what her answer to him would be.

Sometimes he looked down at the floor as he passed her, pacing to and fro; sometimes he looked at her. To show any tenderness would be to say that she might have what she wanted without accepting his part of the agreement. When he saw that she had pursued desperately every possible outcome, and that her thoughts had returned helpless to the solution which he had announced to her as inevitable, he stopped again by her side.

"Don't try to answer me now." He kissed her hand; she had extended it to him, trying to say something. She lifted it now and let it fall again.

Bobby left the room.

CHAPTER XVI

A Disturbing Confession

"Life and death are beyond our reach."—Pasteur.

In her wanderings for a constitutional Madeleine came upon Mr. Penfold hurrying to get his "snow effect" before the light changed.

"I'm not much of a landscape painter," he explained. "You know my specialty's portraits. There's something wonderful about this snow, though, isn't there? There's a blue shadow under those trees that I defy any man to get in paint!"

"A blue shadow?" Madeleine asked. "It looks black to me."

"The untrained eye," was the artist's response. And he drew his eyelids close together and held his head back from the canvas so that his neck made a little pleat over his collar, and his voice was somewhat thickened by this position of his throat.

"Enjoying the party?" he asked.

"Yes, very much indeed. I'm going to have a chat with Mrs. Penfold when I go in. The others have all got their afternoons planned."

"Do," he said. "She's rather blue now. Perhaps you can cheer her up a bit."

"How fast you paint," the young woman observed,

fascinated by the rapidity with which Penfold was covering his canvas. "How long would it take you to do a portrait?"

"It depends upon the sitter," he answered, thinking the question vague.

"How do you mean?"

"Why, if I have a quiet, elderly lady, the chances are that I will get through fairly quickly. Whereas if I have a restless child——"

Madeleine interrupted him.

"But my children are not at all restless!"

Penfold put down his brush and palette.

"Oh!" he said. "You—you have already perhaps had them pose? Or were you——"

"I was thinking that I would like very much to offer a picture of them to my husband for a surprise when he comes back, if you could get it done in time."

"Oh, yes, I could get it done in time. Children are awfully good fun to paint. How large a portrait would you want? It would have to be rather big if you wanted them both to pose together. Couldn't you come around some day next week and see some of my things? There are some coming back from an exhibition in Philadelphia."

"Yes," said Madeleine. "I would be delighted. Any day that you send for me."

"Do tell Mrs. Penfold," he said, seeing that Madeleine was preparing to return to the club. "She will be so glad. She has told me so much

about your children. I don't think she has seen them, but everybody says they are so charming."

Suave and courteous, he bowed Madeleine out of sight, and when she was gone began again at his poor winter landscape.

"I'd rather do one landscape than all the portraits in the world. The idea of taking orders for your painting and doing a thing on time for a surprise! It's degrading! But we need the money. Alida would be scathing if she thought I even hesitated in my mind. Now, more than ever, we need the money."

Alida was stretched out on the narrow bed of the club-house room when Madeleine joined her.

"Do you mind," she said, "if I rest here while you talk to me?"

"Not at all. Can't I do anything for you? Are you feeling ill?"

"I am feeling miserable and discouraged. There are times in one's life when one would rather be done with the whole thing."

Quietly Madeleine took off her gloves and hat and put them aside. She had never heard any one speak in this way, and she could not understand that Mrs. Penfold should say what she had without some serious reason.

Drawing a chair up by the side of the bed she said:

"I am afraid you are unhappy about something?"

Alida looked at her. She was so different from

the other women, so much more sincere than Grace Westervelt, so much more tender than Mrs. Phipps-Brown.

"Don't you ever get discouraged?" Alida asked.

"Yes, of course I do sometimes; but I have my husband and the children. You can't stay discouraged very long with the children," she laughed.

"How many children have you?" Alida asked.

"Two; a boy and a girl. They're very tiny yet, but they keep me busy most of the time. I have never left them before for as long as this."

"What a terrible responsibility!"

"I never thought of it that way," said the mother. "I love them so much I am quite miserable without them."

"You have several nurses, I suppose?"

"Until this winter I had only the Irish woman who has been with me since the oldest one was born. We live in the country, you know. One has more time, and it does not cost nearly so much as in town. Here one seems to spend money for all sorts of useless things, simply because other people are doing it."

"Oh, don't talk about expense!" cried Alida. "The mere thought distresses me. It is like fitting a round peg into a square hole to make an artist's earnings balance with the cost of decent living."

"You have no children, though. One can always deny oneself, but when it comes to depriving a

child, you can't do it; you'd rather go without the very necessities."

Alida watched her closely.

"In the country," Madeleine went on, "we managed to put away something for the children every year. Here in New York it seems as though I could not make both ends meet."

"And suppose," said Alida, "that you had not enough for yourselves and that you found out that you were going to have another child: then how would you feel?"

"I should go back to the country and try to live even more simply than before."

"It is all very well to talk about the country, but suppose your husband's work necessitated his being in the city: what would you do then? This is my case at present."

"What are you going to do?" Madeleine asked attentively.

"Oh!"—the exclamation came with a deep sigh —"I don't know what I shall do! It seems terrible to bring into the world another human being to suffer and struggle when you have not the wherewithal to meet life yourselves. Talk about philanthropy!" she said. "I think the greatest charity would be to permit only such to live as are assured of the best that money can buy."

"You should have been with Mrs. Wallace and me the other day," Madeleine responded. "We



went to see a poor woman who had given birth to her ninth—a forlorn specimen of a baby! Yet the mother assured us that it was as important as any of us in the eyes of God. Her only regret was that any of her nine should have died."

"That sort of thing does very well for the extremely poor. They have no obligations, and when you are as far gone as that nothing makes much difference. As they say themselves: 'When there is not enough for five, there is enough for seven.' The poor are only half civilised. Intelligent people always make money sooner or later, and as soon as you even desire the sort of thing which wealth brings—culture, leisure, beauty, luxury—you simply cannot have a lot of children."

"Then," asked Madeleine, "you think that only the poor should have large families?"

"I don't say exactly that. I say that the poor have no obligations, and the sin in our class is that we bring children into a world of responsibilities which we can't meet for them unless we have large fortunes. Don't you feel yourself, when you see the discontent there is all around you, that it would be wiser and more merciful not to perpetuate unhappiness?"

Madeleine made no answer, and Alida continued:

"Not to speak merely from the child's point of view, consider your husband. Suppose your husband were overworked and none too strong, and that increasing your family meant renunciation for

him of many things he enjoys and needs: would you not hesitate to make his life harder?"

"I suppose," was the answer, "that what you say is reasonable. The principle doesn't seem right to me. There are always ways for reducing one's expenses."

"You speak of living in the country. I dare say it is very cheap if you go far enough away not to be running in and out of New York every day. But what an existence! Haven't you proved this winter that you were going to seed away from the modern progressive movement of town life? I could not endure being isolated. It is out of the question for us to move away from New York, and it is out of the question for Clyde and me to have a family. Each person must be his own judge. My life with a child would be completely finished. I couldn't entertain, which is most important for my husband's work. I couldn't be a companion to him. I should be tied down to the nursery. I should have no more individuality, no more chance to develop and study."

Her tone was so convinced that Madeleine doubted a moment whether she were not herself in the wrong. Gently she said:

"After all, it is not a thing one takes in one's own hands, is it?"

"That is where we do not agree," Alida stated.

Here the conversation was interrupted by Bobby's cheerful voice in the hall.

"Is Mrs. Dillon here?"

He rapped at the door.

"I've come for you to have tea in my suite. Everything is ready, and I shan't wait more than five minutes for you and Mrs. Penfold."

CHAPTER XVII

Race Suicide

"If the women of a nation do not recognise that the greatest thing for any woman is to be a good wife and mother, that nation has cause to be alarmed about its future."

—Theodore Roosevelt.

It was after a conversation with her husband which lasted late into the night that Alida Penfold wrote to Doctor Morrison and asked if she might see him the following day. His answer was prompt, setting a time when there would not be a crowd in the office. The Doctor received many such notes. They were generally written at night, and the various handwritings of his feminine patients showed nervous agitation.

Morrison was a man of forty, tall and fine-looking. His success had been rapid and unusual, due not only to his reputation among scientists, but to the confidence which his personality inspired. With the strictest professional training he possessed a peculiar charm. His father had been a doctor before him in the small country town where he was born. When he had proposed going abroad to finish his studies the old man had afforded him the necessary funds and a few telling words of advice.

"There's no use in going against what's modern,"

he had said. "To my thinking, of course, you could get as much out of experience here as you can out of books over yonder. But I shan't oppose you. I've been all my life a family physician. I've treated sick men. If you go over there with the new theories you'll come back a specialist as like as not. Specialists don't treat sick men any more—they treat diseases, and sometimes they kill the human in curing the disease. But it's modern."

Morrison thought often in the rush of New York life how difficult it was to "treat men." He was a specialist, but this much of his father's advice remained: he never allowed himself, no matter what the pressure and the temptation from a financial point of view, to take so many patients that he could not consider each, as his father had put it, not as diseases, but as "humans."

It was perhaps this which made Alida feel that she might go to him in a time of perplexity as other women came to him. She knew him slightly. She had never consulted him. There were two things which made Morrison, like doctors of his type, the idol among his women patients. They knew that whatever confidence they might make would remain secret, and again, while there was nothing personal in his treatment of them, there was of necessity an intimacy of understanding which escaped often the women's own husbands. So willingly does woman submit to a strong guiding

influence when it is not the mere exercise of a legal right.

As Alida's eyes made a tour of the room in which Morrison received her, her first exclamation was one of pleasure.

"What a charming place! I should have thought an artist lived here."

The Doctor accepted graciously the compliment.

"Your husband is an artist, I believe? I have so little time for visiting the exhibitions that I haven't had the pleasure of seeing his work."

"Yes," Alida sighed. "I am sorry to say my poor husband is a painter."

"Is Mr. Penfold delicate?" the Doctor asked, thinking it was perhaps about Clyde that she had come to consult him.

"No. He's strong enough, but it's such a struggle to live on what one makes painting portraits."

Alida's face was thin and pale. The look of wanness and anxiety took from it its natural sweetness. About the mouth the lines were hard and drawn. She was beautifully dressed, and as she talked one white-gloved hand played with the gold-knobbed umbrella which lay across her knees. Her expression changed from discontent as she began speaking to appeal as she turned to Morrison. Evidently she was very unhappy.

Morrison remembered his father's advice. It would have been easier to prescribe a tonic for this

young woman than to interest himself in her as a "human."

"You are worn out, I suppose?" he asked. "You would be surprised if you knew the number of women who come to me because they are overburdened, and to whom I recommend work as a remedy for their sort of fatigue!"

"It isn't only fatigue that I wanted to consult you about, but really I couldn't do any more than I do!"

"That is generally the cry."

"I have four club meetings a week, besides settlement visits, all my social calls and duties to accomplish, without a carriage of my own."

"Have you no children?"

"No." She flushed and shook her head.

The Doctor, not knowing what had brought Alida to him, did not go with any particular depth into what he said, thinking that at any moment the confidence which his hearer had so far kept from him might be given. Yet it was with earnestness that he continued:

"I make a distinction between activity and agitation. Activity has a purpose back of it. The sort of agitation you describe is no outlet for your natural energies. They are pent up, and they consume you. They cause the inward friction which you call 'nervousness.' The same amount of activity with a natural purpose would bring rest and health to body and mind."

"But I have a purpose," Alida protested. She was a trifle annoyed that the conversation should be getting away from the subject which she did not herself dare broach. She spoke excitedly:

"Life is very short, and my aim is to develop myself in every way I possibly can. Isn't that legitimate? Why should women more than men be *made* for sacrifice?"

"Their most sacred obligation—maternity," said Morrison, "is a sacrifice."

"It may be their most sacred obligation, but it is not their unique end and aim."

"I have had an opportunity," the Doctor answered, "to study a great many women. I don't say that all those who are mothers are happy, by any means, but I can affirm that I have never seen a truly satisfied woman who has not at some time held in her arms a child of her own."

Alida could not but be pleased with the expression on the Doctor's handsome face as he spoke to her. If Clyde had said the same words they would have antagonised her. To Morrison's authority and magnetism she gave a helpless sort of attention.

"You speak of individual development," he went on. "Look at the wrecks with which society is strewn from this fatal shoal. All the strange ills, which range from nervous prostration to insanity, from the misery of the soul known as 'restlessness' to the destruction of the body known as suicide, or the morphine habit, every one of them so characteris-

tic of modern women, has a common cause. Our American women are paying for their transgression, their own will and desire for self-development, for sterility. I see a whole generation passing like driftwood." The Doctor was warming to his subject. "They should be consumed in flames, and the ashes of their follies should be scattered over this virgin land, so that after the old continents are worn out in endless routine, once again there should be youth in the universe, a race that is vigorous, healthy, triumphant. Without natural affections to develop and mature them, without the fruit which gives meaning to the flower, they wither before they are half-blown, they are faded before their blossoming time has come. How can you expect them," he said, smiling indulgently as he looked at Alida, "how can you expect yourself to have any peace of mind until you clearly understand that there is not a creature upon earth, not even the American woman of the twentieth century, who has been put here free of natural duties, to live a purely egotistical existence at the expense of others?"

"I suppose you are right," she said. "Our generation has gone wrong—has missed the aim of existence. But you should not blame us. You should have pity on us—help us. Circumstances were against us. Too much importance has been attached to money. We are all dominated by it. We need more and more if we wish to attain any

sort of position. And to obtain it we are obliged to renounce all sorts of simple joys which in past times would have satisfied us. It is all I can do, for example, in my home, to make both ends meet. How could I bring up a child? How would it be possible?"

A sudden emotion possessed her. This man before her had power: she felt that he held in his grasp the secrets of life and death, that if he would only have pity on her he might lift from her her burden. Clasping her hands nervously, she told him all that was on her mind. Hurriedly the words came, long familiar to her, and yet dyeing her cheeks crimson as she spoke them.

The Doctor listened to the end. He knew every argument she might use. All of them he had heard before. When she had finished, and had sunk back as though exhausted among the cushions of the divan where she sat, he said very deliberately:

"I am afraid there is no help I can give you. No discussion could bring us to look at this in the same way. We have two opposite starting-points. What you are trying to persuade yourself is right I believe to be a crime, Mrs. Penfold."

"Oh, no!" she cried.

"What I would like to offer you is moral aid." The man passed his hand across his brow as though to drive away some cruel thought. "This, to my thinking, is what you really need. Even if your husband were to give up painting and become a

prosperous business man, the inward distress from which you are suffering would not be relieved. You are not unconscious of your natural destiny, but so long as you willingly ignore it you must be unhappy. What destiny could be fuller," he questioned, "for the women of our country, than that of perpetuating the traditions we have begun to found? Our people have a reputation for unparalleled courage, for magnificent energy. Are our women going to let this perish? Is this land of America, this New World, to become a mere shelter, a free lodgings for the fortune-seeking adventurers of the universe, and all because our women have chosen sport, book-learning, factory life, money, as an end and aim, rather than the home?"

As he talked on and on, growing more interested, she realised that she would obtain of him nothing. The disappointment left her listless. Arguments seemed of little use.

"I have not said anything against the home." She was looking out of the window as she spoke, and the Doctor could see that her thoughts had travelled on to other plans than those she might discuss with him.

"The basis of the home," he said, "is love—love for others; not individualism, but sacrifice; devotion not to self, but to the interests of a group. You know this as well as I. In the most rudimentary social existence the protection of life is the first

principle. No matter what advance you may have attained in the exercise of individual rights, I believe there is no society which permits the destruction of life. And as one cannot take life, so you must agree with me, whatever your religious belief, that you cannot give life. Your child would not owe his life to you any more than you owe yours to yourself. You and he alike are merely passing forms swept by the same vital breath. You are a lamp from which another lamp catches fire. The wonderful fire which scatters its sparks far and wide without diminishing its own flame is divine. To extinguish one of these lamps is to be in open rebellion against God—against the Creator who has made the world. It is to set one's will contrary to the course of existence. A priest would even tell you that such a sin deprives him who commits it from his chances of Paradise. I am not a priest. I am a scientist, and I need no other than scientific proofs to affirm that Nature does not wait for another world to curse the woman who goes against her destiny. She brands her here upon earth."

In Mrs. Penfold's attitude there was a touch of fear as she listened to what the Doctor was saying. She moved forward, leaning on her umbrella as though she were about to get up. The weariness in her face was a reflection of her thoughts. The Doctor's expression had changed to one of infinite and tender pity.

A smile traversed her features, and rising she said:

"I think you something of an idealist. You find me too practical—too modern."

"Will you think over what I have said to you?" he asked.

She noticed again, as she had on arriving, the charm of his manner, the agreeable atmosphere of the place; she remembered her sentiments as she had entered the room, and the sudden contrast to her present feelings brought with it a desire to weep. She did not trust herself to speak again.

When she had gone it was some time before the Doctor could resume the duties of his routine work. He had asked her to return and talk with him. He knew that she would not come—that what he had said had made no impression on her, except perhaps one of irritation at the momentary thwarting of her will.

CHAPTER XVIII

A Letter from Phillip

"And every time he touched the earth his strength increased."—*Anon.*

On returning from Mrs. Lemon's, Madeleine was greeted by the children, who waved gaily in the air a letter from their father which had come during her absence.

Without even taking off her hat and gloves, she lifted her veil and sat down, tearing open the envelope and unfolding the sheets of paper. She was happy at hearing from Phillip, yet there was a shade of irritation in advance at what she knew he would say to her. His point of view was always the same, as steady as the lighthouse lantern, and she was aware that she had drifted away from this fixed bright spot. Just what the distance was between them, moral as well as material, she could tell by her own instincts, and the thought of it antagonised her in spite of herself.

Phillip took advantage of the quiet Sundays, when men and horses alike were resting, to describe at length all that was happening. In his mind there was always sufficient leisure to think of his wife and children.

"First let me tell you," he wrote, "that the affair which brought me here seems at last to be taking the right turn. Things are going exactly as we could wish. You know that I am always perfectly frank with you, I don't believe in hiding things, as some men do, until the crash comes, and their wives find out somewhat late that they are ruined. If the business were going badly I should tell you, so be comforted by this good news. Marriage is at least an association where each contributes the best he has, and both share together joys and sorrows. My partner, Murray, in order to spare me all anxiety, did not write me that he had fallen with his horse and broken his leg. He was three months on his back, and during that time things literally went to pieces. The cattle had eczema, and the boys lost their heads. About half of this year's round-up is done for; a lot of the poor beasts had to be killed in order to save the rest. We have succeeded by the greatest care in stamping out the epidemic, and we shall have some fine animals in spite of it. It will mean a trifle less income, a trifle more economy at the Moorlands this summer, my darling. We shall have to postpone building an extension for the house until spring. Murray is a first-rate manager; he is coming out of this miserable lawsuit all colours flying. Now that I am relieved on this point, I have begun to look about me at the beauty of the place. It shows what the charm of this free, healthy life must be if I can enjoy it as I do when I

am separated from those I love. But you can't keep a plant from revelling in the sunshine.

"I thought when I left New York that I was growing old. I no sooner set foot on these prairies than I imagined I was a boy again. Once I had made the tour of the ranch, every turning, every slope of the hills, every ditch, every fence stood out in my memory as though I had never left the place. My old saddle, even, was hanging where I left it, with the marks of my knees worn into the leather. I had forgotten the delicious sensation of riding alone this far from civilisation. Your eyes half closed, you swing along, a healthy human being, cradled by the swaying of the horse between the sky and the earth, which bear no trace of man and which if ever suggest the Creator.

"Cedar Creek isn't exactly a New York yet, although you would be surprised at the way it has grown in the last few years. There is quite a village grouped around the railroad station; there are two streets, and a town hall where they hold political meetings. A number of the ranchmen have married and gone there to settle; they have no end of children, and seem perfectly happy. Their lives are simple and rustic to a degree, but there isn't a beggar among them. No one has ever died of hunger at Cedar Creek; everybody is hail-fellow-well-met. There are not the tragic contrasts of riches and poverty that one sees in a city. Here employer and employee are on the same footing;



they eat, dress, and live about alike, all having common interests, and no one indulging in any great luxury, as you can imagine.

"Everybody works like mad. Laziness is unheard of. Each man knows his work and does it the best he can. No time is lost in vague speculation. Occasionally a tramp puts in his appearance and asks for food and lodging; he can have his pick of homes; all are open to him. In the morning, by way of thanks, if he is gratefully disposed, he lends a hand with the work, and if he takes a notion to become a regular workman there is always plenty of employment; nobody bothers him for fear he may get what belongs to an earlier comer. There are chances to make a living for any able-bodied man who is not afraid of hard labour. The result is a sort of equality which is a joy to behold. It is not the money a man may have deposited in the bank which entitles him to esteem: it is his energy, his physical force and tact in managing men and beasts alike, his superior intelligence which gives him a foremost place. And he is not an object of envy, for the rest feel that he has got what his own merits deserve. There seems to be a place for everybody and everybody is in his place.

"It hasn't occurred to the women yet that they might take better care of the horses and cattle than the men do. What they are quite sure of is that their husbands will come in from work ravenously

hungry; they manage to meet these appetites with first-rate food; they supply exactly the husbands' needs, and in turn they depend upon their men for protection not only material, but moral. The man and the woman are side by side; he is the provider—the male; she is the helpmate—his consolation.

"I am afraid Mrs. Wallace would not think much of such women, they are so amicable, so reconciled to the fact of their husbands' physical superiority, and they show their gratitude by taking the very best care they can of the children, the kitchen, and the household. There are certain unbalanced people nowadays, not to mention names, whose idea would be to replace by scientific processes all that Nature and God have created; they would rather see a child brought up on sterilised food than on its mother's milk. I would like them some day to pass through Cedar Creek toward evening, and see the families here at their evening meal. The children, I can assure you, are more healthy looking than little Ballestier and those of his generation who have been submitted to scientific systems. Even our own babies would look somewhat delicate by the side of these fat, rosy creatures, who multiply yearly as fast as the cattle themselves. They are the future strength of the country, these young American-born Americans. It is upon them we must depend if we don't want the country to be given over to the innumerable immigrants who arrive with every steamer.

"At this hour in the evening, dearest, you and the children seem farthest from me. I do not imagine you in the New York house, which is unfamiliar to me, but in our home at the Moorlands. It is in the surroundings of our own home that you appear to me so vividly that I cannot refrain at times from speaking your name aloud. Murray is my confidant. We have always been the best of friends, and it is a great pleasure to be with him again. I am almost as fond of horses as he. We are perfectly agreed about the administration of the ranch. After such a long separation it seems to me that I should have a thousand things to talk over with him, and that it should take all of our long evenings to catch up with past years. But the fact is, once we have exchanged news concerning the cattle, the crops, and the boys, there is a trying silence between us. So much has happened in my life which to Murray is a closed chapter. He sees that I am thinking of something else; he tries in his kindly, awkward way to turn the conversation into channels which he knows will interest me. Of course I have told him all about the children—everything they have ever said and done, their wonderful progress and cleverness. He listens to me, leaning back in his chair, his legs crossed, and now and then, without taking his pipe out of his mouth, he grumbles: 'Just like cattle!'

"But of you, Madeleine—how can I speak to him of you? I feel a certain shyness in telling him how

lonely I am not to see you at the window in the morning when I start off for work, and how I miss you at night when I return to the ranch-house alone. Murray could hardly say that this reminded him of his cattle. He would be embarrassed and I would, so I say nothing!

"My mind goes back, darling, not only to the Moorland days, when I see you as Mrs. Dillon with the two babies in your arms, but to the Madeleine of Elliston in her mauve dress under the lamplight as I saw her the first time, so fair, so smiling, so innocent. I can remember my feelings as I returned after that first visit. My heart was so heavy it seemed suddenly to me that my old life had become unbearable, and that you alone could give me what I longed for. Oh, Madeleine, I little dreamed the happiness that awaited me. Do you remember the long letter I wrote you from the ranch, submitting my plans and confiding my hopes? The boy who carried it to the train and who three days later brought back your answer is still here. He is married and lives at Cedar Creek. Do send me some toys for his children. I shall always have a tender feeling for him.

"I warned you, you remember, that our life would be very modest. I don't believe you have ever regretted it. The luxury which you see in New York does not make you envious, does it? When you look at Kate and Edward can't you say to yourself, 'I have two jewels more precious,

dearer in the eyes of my husband, than the pearls and diamonds of these gay butterflies'?

"I was a proud man when I brought you from your father's house to my home. It seemed that the house had become possessed of a soul; you were like a mysterious, irresistible force. As soon as I was away from you, whether I talked to the farm-hands, whether I tried to read or to work in my library, I felt drawn by some magnetism, which compelled me to find you, to rest my eyes upon your eyes. But it was when the bud became a full-blown rose; it was when the blessing of motherhood was added to that of wifehood, that I knew and understood happiness. Up to that time, however great our love, there was a certain resistance between us, sometimes as gentle as a caress, sometimes like a cry of pain, as though one of us were consuming the other, as though a flame wished to absorb another flame.

"Our release came the moment the child was placed in our arms. And when there were two children in the household, were we not doubly rich? Daily the loveliness of your youth, the ardour of my affection, unfolded like flowers in the sunlight.

"Are you as eager as I, beloved, to be back again on the Moorlands terrace when the peaceful evening shadows lengthen, folding our love in mystery? Do you long for it, as I do—that moment when I shall hear your heart beating against mine, when you

shall no longer be a phantom? Oh, happy night when at last you say: 'Yes, Phillip, the trial of separation is at an end.'

"Dearest, take courage. It cannot be much longer before we meet.

"In your dear letters, which come so regularly, I feel an increasing restlessness. Are you uneasy about something? About me? I am perfectly well. About the children? If you were worried as to them I should know it. About yourself? You are not the sort of woman who seeks a selfish aim for her existence—any end outside of those she loves and those who love her. The happiness you bring others suffices to make you happy yourself. It is the uneasiness of city life, the useless agitation, the feverish rush which are taking possession of you. You are wearing yourself out. You need me, dearest, by your side. We must have patience.

"Only a month more and I shall be there, knocking at the door of the little rented home where you have all suffered at being alone, as I have suffered at being separated from you. Then my arms shall infold you, and you may ask: 'Phillip, take me away from here—take me home.'

"Mad with joy, I shall carry you off like a miser who goes to hide his treasure in the secret place of his delight. We shall pick up the thread of happiness where we let it drop for a moment. The day after my return, Madeleine, this absence will

be only a memory. You shall say to me in the morning when you wake:

"'You know I have had such a bad dream! I imagined that I was living far away from you—that I was trying to get on without you. Take me close against your heart, so that I can forget my nightmare.'"

There was a blank space at the bottom of the page, just large enough for Phillip to have put there, as the children sometimes did, a kiss.

Madeleine was sure that Phillip's lips had touched this spot, yet she did not kiss it, as she had so often done with other letters from him, even the recent ones. She sat with her brows raised, her eyes expressionless.

"I know that he loves me," she thought. "I can never hear him say so too often. But he is wrong in thinking that I am impatient for the Moorlands. I should suppose he could understand that without any great effort. I am not a perfect baby, like Kate and Edward. I have some wishes and desires of my own. Mary Evans is quite right: 'What men choose to call our happiness is nothing more nor less than the pleasure they expect us to give them'!"

CHAPTER XIX

AVENGING NATURE

"O Death in Life! the days that are no more."—TENNYSON.

FOR several days after the coaching party Madeleine found it hard to sleep. That one short expedition to the Country Club had been for her like the brusk turning on a highway which brings suddenly into view a new horizon. She remembered her terror one day as a little child: she had been leaning on the rail of a rustic bridge when it gave way. For months she could not get over the nervous fright it gave her to see the rotten wood disappear before her eyes into the peaceful water below. She used to dream that she was being carried away into space or that she was falling, falling, falling; then she woke up with a start, trembling and crying out for help.

Her love for Phillip and the children was a protection against all harm, and yet sometimes in the middle of the night she lay on her pillow listening to a small inward voice which seemed to be giving the preliminary alarm of peril ahead. With an innocence almost childlike in its simplicity she questioned her own conscience, and even in the darkness a flush of shame mounted to her brow.

How could it be possible that she, such a devoted and loving wife, could have listened with a secret satisfaction to the compliments Bobby paid her? Why had she been almost hurt when she found out afterward that this selfish young creature was only making use of her to excite the jealousy of Mrs. Phipps-Brown? She was disgusted at having been mixed up in this combination of money and sentiment. Another thing disturbed her: she could not speak to Phillip of all this, and it was the first time since their marriage that she had ever hidden anything, even as slight as this, from her husband.

Alida's confessions weighed heavily on her heart, and she was astonished not to have found some better argument with which to meet them. On the contrary, Mrs. Penfold's reasons kept ringing in her ears. They were not like the plausible arguments set forth by the lawyer who is not convinced as to the soundness of his case; they returned sure of themselves, almost arrogantly, to her mind. There was one sentence in particular which kept coming back to her just as Alida had pronounced it with a half-scornful, half-exasperated intonation:

"You're always talking about the country! Everybody doesn't live in the country! We aren't country people—we are city people!"

"It's quite true," Madeleine thought to herself, "that the life which Phillip and the children and I lead at the Moorlands is rather unnatural. One has much heavier responsibilities in the city, and

obligations of an altogether different sort. A woman hasn't the same amount of time for her housekeeping nor for her babies if she wants to keep up, even half-way, with things. And if you aren't in touch you look like an idiot wherever you go."

Her sudden desire for independence alternated with outbursts of tenderness toward her husband such as she did not feel even when Phillip was with her.

She regretted for his sake that he should be separated from her and from the children. Often he had said to her:

"The best years of life are when one's children are little."

At the Moorlands Phillip kept on his desk a small book labelled in his clear handwriting: "History of my children." For four years he had written regularly in it, but he would not let Madeleine see it. With a mysterious air he always said to her:

"I will read it to you when we are old—when we want to look back upon the past, as we do now toward the future."

She supposed that he was keeping a diary of the first words, the first smiles, the first steps, all the indications of character which, from the very outset, presage the general direction wherein the child grown to manhood or womanhood will make his way through life.

"Poor, darling Phillip; there will be a big blank

in his book," she thought lovingly, "and he can never fill it up, for we shall not have any more children. It's a perfect joy to have brought into the world a boy and a girl—a boy for Phillip and a girl for myself, but I don't see what would be the use of having two boys and two girls. They would not bring us any happiness we do not already possess, and we are really too poor to afford a lot of children. It's different with the country people. They need hands to work; their sons grow up labourers and take care of their parents later."

She did not suspect that this idea of having no more children was quite new with her—that she had absorbed it at the club discussions, and that Phillip would perhaps have had a sad surprise if he could have heard his wife at that moment. To Madeleine it seemed simple common sense; it was the natural fruit of the recently sown seed. The very firmness with which she had arrived at this decision had suggested to her the idea of having a portrait painted of the boy and girl as a surprise for the father when he returned. They could keep it always as a reminder of the enchanting period between babyhood and the wonderful age of reason which she and Phillip would never have another chance to study.

Somewhere in the frontispiece of a magazine she had seen the picture of two royal children, by some well-known foreign artist. The youngest child was seated on an armchair and the older boy stood by

his side. She could see how Edward and Kate would look in this pose. They would be adorable with their fluffy curls as golden as honey, their bare arms, their stout bare legs which the city air had not yet melted away.

Her project was so real since the day she had spoken of it with Clyde Penfold that she felt a keen disappointment when the Penfolds' maid who came to the door when she called answered indifferently that Mrs. Penfold was out.

"Is she at the club, do you know?"

"No, ma'am; I don't think so. Miss Evans just telephoned over to know if she was coming round to the extra meeting."

"And Mr. Penfold?"

"He has gone to his framer's, but I guess he'll be in soon. There's a gentleman coming to see him at five."

"Then I'll wait. Will you please show me up to the studio?"

She had not been in this room since the day when Mrs. Wallace had brought her there to the Lunch Club. This first introduction came back to her with a rush; even the smallest details she recollected—Alida's uneasiness about the servants, the positive manner in which Mary Evans had pronounced her discourse on the book under discussion. Scarcely three months had elapsed since that memorable day. As Madeleine recalled the idiotic impression she must have made on all

those clever, intelligent, well-known women she felt ashamed.

"And the worst of it is," she thought, "that I did not suspect my own inferiority. At home, as a girl, I had been a sort of superior housekeeper; at the Moorlands I lived in the nursery. If I hadn't had the good luck to come and spend a winter in New York I never would have supposed that a woman has something more important to do in life than order around servants and play doll with her babies. Phillip is quite right in saying that the country air is better for the lungs than this New York atmosphere, but the lungs are not the only things to be considered! The brain should be given a chance to develop, and the city air certainly sharpens the wits."

In a long glass where Penfold liked to study the coutours of his drawings Madeleine caught sight of her own image. She was so pleased with it that she rose and went nearer the mirror. Without doubt her figure had improved, and she was delighted at her own effort to do away with her hips like Mrs. Phipps-Brown and Grace Westervelt, who were as slender as boys. But her complexion gave her less cause for satisfaction. She was pale, and her brows contracted as she perceived two faint little wrinkles, like the mark of a finger-nail on the face of a wax doll; they followed from her nose to the corners of her mouth. It was not only Madeleine's figure, but her expression as well, which

had changed. "As a matter of fact" she thought, "when I came to New York I was only a girl; now I am a woman; it is natural that my face should show it. I have reflected about many things. I was so ignorant. But I have been awakened—my eyes have been opened to life."

She sighed.

More than once she had looked nervously at the watch she carried now in a bracelet on her wrist. She was so often in a hurry; the distances in New York were so great; she had so much to do; it was all such a contrast to the peaceful monotony of the Moorlands days, broken only by an occasional ring at the bell.

She was about to call the servant and tell her that she could wait no longer, but would ask Mrs. Penfold to write and make an appointment with her, when she heard a carriage drive up in great haste. Thinking that perhaps Mr. Penfold was himself bringing back a frame from the shop, she went out on to the stairs to listen.

The carriage stopped before the door. Whoever got out of it was impatient, for there was a violent ring at the bell. It must be something very pressing. The servant who opened the door called at once excitedly for the cook, who came running upstairs, and then, above whispers and hurried footsteps, Madeleine could hear groans of pain.

What could have happened?

She did not dare go down; she stood on the landing, the knob of the studio door still in her hand. At last the maid came out of the hall room on the first floor where Penfold slept and ran upstairs, calling for Madeleine; she seemed distracted and hardly to know what she was doing.

"What ever can be the matter with Mrs. Penfold! She dropped into my arms as soon as I got the door open, and if it hadn't been for the cook and me carrying her she could never have got into her bed. Come quick—do! She's awful far gone. She seems like she was dying."

Whiter than the sheet on which she lay, Alida had quite lost consciousness. Thus immovable she no longer suffered, but her eyes, deep sunk in a circle of black, showed clearly how close she had passed to the gate of agony whence the soul in its flight sends back the sharp cry of final parting.

Slowly, breathing the salts Madeleine held to her nostrils, she recovered consciousness only to begin groaning again.

"Oh, what agony! How can I bear it? It is killing me! I cannot live!"

Madeleine, trembling, tried to reassure her friend.

"Alida, be brave, dear; you are a little better already. I am going to send for a doctor."

The sick woman assented with a slight movement of the head.

"Oh, yes," she said; "a doctor."

"Whom do you want?"

Madeleine thought that undoubtedly Mrs. Penfold had had a fall, which, in her present condition, might be very serious. At once she thought of Morrison, and as though with a sudden flash of inspiration she said:

"I am going to send for Morrison."

At the sound of this name Mrs. Penfold started. Her eyes, as she turned them to Madeleine, were full of terror; the tone of her voice was desperate.

"Oh, not Morrison. Anybody you like, but not him; not him. And Clyde, where is he? I want my husband. Couldn't you tell him to come?"

Leaving the servants to undress Alida and put her to bed, Madeleine ran up to the studio, hunted feverishly through an address-book on the table, telephoned for a doctor and for Penfold, who arrived at the same moment, and who, without waiting to greet Madeleine, went quickly to Alida's bedside. Mrs. Dillon did not follow them. She could be of no use, and she feared some domestic drama which it would be better for her to ignore. Yet she did not want to go away without being assured about this poor friend, who only two days before had been with her on a pleasure party and who now seemed so near death.

She could hear footsteps running hither and thither, a bell ringing, the servants going back and forth, and above every other sound of confusion she could distinguish the groan which beat unin-



terruptedly against Alida's half-parted lips. It was the only sign of life she gave.

After almost an hour had elapsed silence was relieved by the creaking of the Doctor's polished boots in the hall below. Penfold was with him, and she could hear what the two men were saying. Penfold's voice was supplicating.

"There's hope, then? You think we can save her?"

Madeleine could picture the Doctor's expression and gesture as he answered this question.

"We can be sure of only one thing: for the time being the hemorrhage has stopped. If it should begin again send for me at once."

"But you do not fear any complications, do you?"

"Unfortunately, I do. Infection is inevitable. We shan't pull her through without peritonitis." And after a pause he added: "Your wife has been playing a dangerous game, Mr. Penfold—dangerous and culpable."

Their voices died away, and Madeleine could no longer distinguish what they were saying, but she had heard enough.

It was no accident, then, that had jeopardised Alida's life! It was the terrible decision of her own will—her personal determination to resist the course of Nature!

Madeleine hoped that Penfold had forgotten her and would go back to his wife. When he opened

the studio door her heart sank. He looked half-mad. He started toward Madeleine, and then, suddenly covering his face with his hands, he sobbed aloud.

Dropping into a chair, he put his elbows on the table. Shaking all over, he buried his face on his arms and sobbed:

"God help us!"

"Courage——" said Madeleine. She could not go on. The man was trying to speak. There were things which he wanted to say and which must be said.

"What was it that she feared—poverty? I am well and strong and full of energy. A child would not have ruined me. Who knows? It might perhaps have been a benediction! It would have kept Alida at home. It would have prevented her from spending her time among society women who are so much richer than we that they dazzle her with their fine clothes, their grand dinners, and all the luxury that I can't give her on the proceeds of my poor work. And as for me, this child, this new life in the house would have stimulated me. I could no longer have felt that an artist is a victim if he sacrifices himself for anything but his art. I would have remembered that I was a father, and that if I failed to create works of art which came up to my ideal, at least I had collaborated in a living work, the bringing up of a soul."

He gazed before him as though far away he

could perceive that happiness which might have been his, the paternal joy for which he could no longer hope.

"But," said Madeleine, "your wife will get well. She will understand."

There was fury in his expression.

"Never! Never!" he cried. "You don't know what the Doctor says."

He caught Madeleine by the arm with such force that she drew away half-frightened, and this involuntary movement brought Penfold to himself. He let go of her, and with his hand over his eyes he said:

"Forgive me! I think I am losing my mind. I don't know what I am doing. Oh! but if you could know the curse he has pronounced!"

In a broken voice he repeated the Doctor's words:

"Even if your wife escapes with her life, she will always be an invalid."

Madeleine's eyes were lowered, but touching her arm Penfold forced her to look at him.

"It is finished," he said; "and now that the chance of having a child is gone, our torment has begun. Mine is moral. I was weak with her. Hers is physical. Our happiness, whatever it amounted to, our intimate life is ended. She has blighted hope. Between her and me—between both of us and any possible joy in the future, there is henceforth the stain of blood—the blood of a crime!"



PART III



CHAPTER XX

Too Late

"Man makes a death which nature never made."—Young.

Mrs. Lemon had persuaded Martha to have a consultation. She had grown thin and pale, and while she insisted that there was nothing the matter with her, she was often unable to leave her room. The doctors agreed that she must have a change, but Martha refused the remedy proposed. She did not want to go away; she would stay in the house all winter if necessary, but she would not travel. For this decision she gave a variety of reasons. To herself she admitted that the only bond which held her to New York was the hope of seeing Robert Van Allan. Since the day they had parted he had not been out of her mind. All the penetration she could command was bent on determining whether he still loved her.

Every day some one of her friends spent an hour with her in the afternoon, but so long as Robert's name had not been mentioned she felt irritated with her visitor.

The various tasks which she imposed upon herself were accomplished mechanically. The whole vitality of her thoughts was centered on Van Allan.

So far had the inward study of her past impressions taken hold of her that she was listless to all contact with the outer world.

On the library table the letters lay in a heap as the maid had placed them day after day. Martha had not opened one. She had not interest enough to answer.

At last, after a long talk with Madeleine, in which the latter had urged her friend earnestly to regain her hold upon life, Martha took up the budget which had waited her attention so long.

There were announcements as to the meetings of the Lunch Club. The lunch club—what irony! There was a note from Mrs. Wallace, asking her to a party she was giving for Ballestier the following afternoon. This she tore up and threw in bits on the floor. She did not want to see this group of babies, beginning life unconscious of the misery that awaited them in future years; she did not want to see the mothers, wreathed in smiles, revelling in the natural destinies which fate had permitted them to follow. Mary Evans wrote asking her to visit a new case which had been reported to the Settlement. The mere thought of trying to bring comfort to the poor in her present state of mind disgusted her. She could send them money anonymously, but she was more in need of help than they could be. Business letters from her lawyer and her broker reminded her how

long she had neglected her interests and how little difference material things now made to her.

Last in the bundle there were a few lines from Mrs. Phipps-Brown, written on a card.

"I am having a few people in to tea on Thursday," it read. "I know you are not going anywhere, but a little amusement is the best remedy I have yet found when I was run down as you are. There won't be more than a hundred at the house. You can find a quiet corner. Mr. Bing is going to read some Browning. I know you always enjoy him. I have asked on purpose Van Allan and several of your favourites. Don't fail to come, at about five."

Thursday? This was Thursday. At five? The clock on the mantelpiece marked three. Behind it she sought the reflection of her own pale face in the mirror. At last there was a contact between the outside world and the inward turmoil of memories. But could she go looking as she did?

To the maid who answered her ring she said:

"Please get ready my blue dress, my furs, and my new black hat. I am going out at five."

From the floor, where she had thrown it, she picked up Mrs. Wallace's letter, and hurriedly she wrote an affectionate answer, to say that she was better and would come with pleasure to the babies' party. The brokers' typewritten communication evoked various mental comments which she noted for them, and to Mary's request she responded

heartily. It all seemed easy to her because in an hour she was going to see the man she loved.

She got up and looked at herself a second time in the glass. The colour was coming back to her cheeks and already she was less faded.

When she had finished writing it was four; in a few minutes she would begin to dress. These moments were sweet to her. They led toward a certain happiness, after which she might again be plunged into the utter darkness of the last few weeks.

Continuing the perusal of her mail, she opened the marked copy of a newspaper which had been directed to her in an unfamiliar handwriting, and glanced down the columns of the first page. Toward the corner there was a pencil-mark over the headlines of an ironical article on marriage. "It takes a very wise woman to manage a fool," it read, "but there is no woman too inferior to do what she pleases with a clever man." And turning the pages, Martha saw the announcement of Faxon's marriage to the maid-servant who for several years had taken care of his rooms. In her present state of mind, far from feeling any responsibility at what she knew in her heart was the ruin of Faxon's career, she was conscious that this act of her friend in allying himself to a woman of the servant class delivered her from all remorse regarding the situation.

"It is small wonder," she thought to herself, "that I should have been unable to respond to

Faxon's devotion, since at so low a level he has found his mate." And she laughed.

When she attempted to address a few lines of friendly recognition to the newly married man she could find nothing to say. Her mind was elsewhere.

Before the door of her Louis XIII. home Mrs. Phipps-Brown had had an awning placed. Martha, passing under the striped covering, noticed the haggard faces of the few poor creatures who stood by, snatching this glimpse of luxury as they might the crumbs from the poor man's table. The gaslight and warmth from within, the blue snow without, and this swift contact with poverty as Martha entered the well-warmed house, added to the quickening of her senses.

The rooms were thronged. At once in the distance the girl caught sight of Robert. She turned quickly her eyes from the familiar lines of this handsome brow and mouth, and as she held out her hand in greeting to Mrs. Phipps-Brown she was trembling.

"How good of you to come!" Mrs. Phipps-Brown chatted. With an eye fixed upon the door, she seemed to have only time for her guests before they came within speaking distance; then she hurried them firmly forward with one gloved hand, while with the other she twisted a new chain of pearls which was knotted over the lace front of her elaborate velvet gown. Occasionally a man-servant came for a whispered order. Entertaining, to Mrs. Phipps-

Brown, meant to be preoccupied about her guests. Martha was swept gently along in the multitude. She spoke to her various friends, who were eager in their inquiries about her health. She answered their questions mechanically, and wondered at the same time how it would be possible to have a few words alone with Robert.

Never had the house looked so well. Every one knew that Phipps-Brown, on the brink of ruin, had been taken into partnership with Bobby Southerland. Every one did not know that Mrs. Phipps-Brown waited only that this incident should be forgotten to begin proceedings for divorce. At the end of the long salon there was a new tapestry, which reflected its soft pink and green tints in the mirror opposite. On the chimney-piece and over the tables there was a profusion of American Beauties, sending their heavy odour into the warm air. From the dining-room came a smell of punches and hot tea, and behind the screen of palms in the hall the scarlet coats of the Tziganes showed like tropical blossoms as the Hungarians swayed in the rhythm of the melodies which they beat and wrung from their instruments.

Martha, supersensitive after her long imprisonment, responded as though in a swoon to the atmosphere, charged, as it came to her, with perfumes and music.

She passed Bobby and Mrs. Dillon in close conversation. Since the Phipps-Brown ruin and reor-

ganisation Bobby had lessened his attentions to Phipps-Brown's wife, and, as on the day of the coaching party, he had paid somewhat marked attention to Madeleine. Martha could overhear them. They were planning for a bazaar which was to be held in the parlours of the Waldorf-Astoria the following day.

"I have no end of things that will be of use for your booth," Bobby was saying. "There is a lot of Empire stuff up at the house. I'll send it all down, and anything you don't want you can have the man bring back. I've got some perfectly bully jewels that belonged to Josephine. You've simply got to wear them. I picked them up when I was in Paris. You can imagine they're not much use to me. They will be stunning in your hair—a sort of a crown effect"

"Really," Madeleine protested, "I don't think I could possibly use them. Something might happen to them. They must be awfully valuable."

"Well, what good does it do them to be valuable if nobody ever puts them on?"

Bobby's tone had taken the peevish note which sounded in it each time that any one went against his will.

Having come quite up to them, Martha stopped and spoke a few words before drifting on in the crowd.

She was conscious that by the force of desire the distance between her and Robert was lessening.

He had not yet seen her. Suddenly there was a lull in the corner where he stood. She was by his side and had spoken his name.

He turned, and almost as a reproach came his exclamation: "Martha!"

"Yes," her words were hurried, as though she wished to explain before he had a chance to speak, "yes, I came because I knew that you were going to be here. I wanted to see you; I had to see you. I have been very ill."

"Martha!" he repeated.

"Don't try to stop me. You must hear what I have to say. I have thought of nothing else since you left me. You must come back to me. It will kill me if you don't."

Her eyes were lowered. She shook her head back and forth, as though it were heavy with the weight of sorrow, and said again the words:

"It will kill me."

Seeing her emotion, and fearing that tears would follow the break in her voice, he drew her aside into a small room opening out of the library.

"Martha," he said, "how ill you look!"

At these words of tenderness she covered her face with her hands and wept. Van Allan stood by her between the lights of the salon and the half-drawn curtains of the room where they were.

He had determinedly kept Martha out of his mind since their parting. His feelings, which had been anger at first, had changed to the anguish of

regret before finally he had become insensible. She appeared to him now in the form of temptation to a fatal habit from which he had just recovered. He pitied her.

"Robert," she whispered through her closed fingers, "sit down here beside me. Nobody will see you."

He glanced behind him, drew the curtains, and sat down, taking Martha's hand in his own.

"We must not open old wounds."

"Open them?" she sobbed. "Were yours, then, healed?"

He attempted to reason with her, to recall their parting and all that was definitive in the conversation they had had when he left her.

"Don't! Don't!" she cried. "Words may come after. They have little meaning, anyway. You are here. I can see you, touch you. What do I need to know but that?"

Gently she leaned against him, and through her tears he could see that she was smiling.

Her furs had slipped from her shoulders, and he could feel the warmth of her body against his; out of her gown's folds came the perfume of flowers; his heart beat with heavy strokes. Then like a spring torrent over an old river-bed all the passion and desire he had ever felt for this woman came with a rush through his veins.

His lips sought hers.

It was he first who drew away from her.

"Enough of this poison!"

"Poison!" she repeated, half-dazed.

"Only the touch of your lips could make me forget their danger. Why did you do this? Why lay this trap?"

He got up. She put out her arms and tried with one hand to cover his mouth so that he could not continue. But, heedless of her, he finished, brutally, what he had to say.

"My regiment leaves to-morrow for the Philippines. I go with them as captain. Why have you sought to shatter me at the moment when I need all my strength?"

Some cord snapped within her—the last that attached her to life, she thought as she felt it go.

"If I were to give this up," he went on, seeing that she was silent—"if I were to resign from the army, what sacrifices would you make for me? None! It would be useless to ask it of you!"

Martha said nothing.

"It would have been kinder to let me go without this fresh bitterness."

She gazed very steadily at him and then said:

"Go; yes, do go."

She could hear the monotony of her own voice. If there were a storm to come it must be when she was alone; she should profit by the calm which preceded it to say without emotion the trifling farewell words which needed no expression, as they had no meaning. She held out her hand.

"Your friend to the end," she pledged.

Robert bowed his handsome head over the gloved fingers and kissed them. When he had passed through the curtains he turned and pulled them apart and looked again at Martha. She had not moved. Her eyes were very brilliant and she was smiling.

"His to the end!"

She dragged herself from the scarlet cushions, adjusted her wraps, her veil, her hat, muttering to herself meanwhile:

"And the end is not far off!"

There was something like exhilaration in what Martha felt as she left the Phipps-Browns' and hurried through the lamp-lit winter streets alone. It was long since she had slept or eaten; her nerves were exasperated. She sped so swiftly that those who passed her turned to see what it was that carried her forward as though on the wind. Her head was bent, her hands were deep in her muff, and through the snow her gown trailed, leaving its mark on the glistening frost. On, on she went. It was miles to her small empty home, and she walked them as though she had been going toward life instead of away from it. Her mouth showed determination; her eyes moved restlessly about as one who seeks to simplify the details of a chosen plan.

Before crossing Washington Square she stopped at a telegraph office. The air was warm within,



and the colour mounted to her cheeks as she bent over the counter and wrote the following message:

Mr. Charles Sheffield,
Boston, Massachusetts.
Your niece is dangerously ill. We fear for her life. Come at once.
DOCTOR MORRISON.

When at last she reached the house it seemed to rise like a barrier between her and things that were still to be decided. She sat for a moment on the steps and then went in, taking no heed of the maid who held out a tray with cards and letters.

It was to the library that she made her way, with the same firm step which had brought her from Mrs. Phipps-Brown's.

She locked the door, and opening the drawer of the table, she took from it a small glistening object. She noticed how thin and wiry her hands looked as she held the firearm.

"I seem to clutch it," she thought, "as though it were my salvation."

The letters which she had written a few hours before were still on the desk. They brought Faxon back to her mind.

"Poor Frank! I have paid for my egoism. I realise now what you have suffered."

Her throat tightened, and there was momentarily a wavering in the perfect calm which had so far

sustained her. Fearing to give way, she unlocked the door, rang for the servant, and said, handing her the letters:

"Tell them to carry these at once to the nearest box. I shall not dine, and do not want to be disturbed until to-morrow morning."

She hesitated and added:

"You need not come back."

In her own room, with as much care as though she were preparing for her wedding day, she dwelt over this final toilet. She wrote several lines at her desk. Then she put out the lights. Only the glow of the fire, which had burned low, prolonged a half-dusk and kept the room from darkness. Martha watched the flames. They flickered and then died away, leaving the embers gray.

At last, yielding to the lassitude which was to find soon its everlasting rest, she stretched upon the bed the frail limbs that dawn would find devoid of life.

CHAPTER XXI

An Empire Gown

"Ne surprends jamais à sa toilette la femme que tu aimes."

In the large upper ball-room of the Waldorf-Astoria Bobby was helping Madeleine to arrange her booth for the charity kermess. He had sent down a quantity of Empire furniture, and under his arm he carried a small case with the jewels which he had persuaded Madeleine to wear.

Everything was in disorder. There were garlands of evergreen, odds and ends of tarlatan, and cases of provisions strewn hither and thither. A sound of hammering came from the other end of the room, where Grace Westervelt and a group of friends were at work; and the confusion encouraged a certain intimacy between Madeleine and the young man. It was unusual for them to be together in the morning. Bobby needed to appeal constantly to Madeleine about the work they were doing. The hall was enormous, there was nobody near them, and the noise aided in isolating them.

"Where shall I put this?" Bobby held up a strip of yellow silk brocade. He was very close to Madeleine.

"Put it on the back of that chair," she

commanded, feeling at the same time that she was nearing hours of festivity which made these moments of preparation delicious.

She was to wear an Empire gown copied from an old engraving by Grace Westervelt's dressmaker. Her hair was to be dressed by a French coiffeur. Each of the women was to be in the costume of a different epoch, and the committee had decided that if the things were not done well it would be ridiculous, details being of the greatest importance in obtaining a general effect.

All this had led Madeleine into greater expense than she had dreamed, but it was something she would never regret. She wondered if she could describe it to Phillip so that he would realise it. Of course she would have her photograph taken to keep for the children.

Madeleine's children had come with her, and they were playing about among the many blocks of wood and the sawdust which fell from the carpenter's table.

Fraulein stood near, austere and disapproving, a jacket over her arm and an umbrella in her hand. She had several times told Mrs. Dillon that the babies were taking cold, but Madeleine explained that she could not leave until she had finished with Mr. Southerland, and that she thought the room warm enough. Edward and Katie, however, took turns sneezing, and it was the boy himself who came to her at last, saying:



"Mamma, I have a sore throat. I can't swallow!" and with this he began to cry.

The dismal note of his wailing voice put a melancholy end to Madeleine's feeling of festivity.

"Mrs. Phipps-Brown is right," she thought. "Having children makes any sort of social success out of the question."

Aloud to the boy she said:

"Yes, darling, we are going now. See the pretty booth? This is mother's booth. Mother is going to be dressed like an empress—like the lady in the picture. Do you see?"

To Bobby she bid a somewhat distracted farewell, promising to return as early as possible, in her costume.

Bobby was provoked. He waited until the group of infants, nurse, and mother had disappeared, and then he murmured to himself:

"There's no sort of sport a kid can't spoil if he takes a notion to!"

At home Madeleine found a dispatch, which she tore hastily open. It was from Phillip, saying that he would arrive at two. It was then half-past one. Impulsively she turned to the German governess.

"Oh, Fraulein, isn't it too bad? My husband is coming at two. I can't possibly get to the station in time. We would cross each other on the way. I can't understand why he let me know so late." Her tone was decided. "We must have lunch at

once. Get the children ready. Tell them their father is coming. You can all sit at the table with me for to-day. Hurry a little, please, could you, Fraulein; it would be so kind of you? This is such unexpected news. The coiffeur will be here in a few minutes. Dear me!"

She ran excitedly into the dining-room and prepared the extra places herself.

They had hardly finished eating when the bell rang and Phillip's voice sounded in the hall.

"Madeleine!" he called, and in a minute his arms were about her.

He gathered to him one after another the boy and the girl and again his wife. His emotion was great and he could scarcely speak.

"Show me the way," he said. "I don't know this home! Take me up to your room—to our room," he whispered, kissing Madeleine's hair where it grew golden out of her neck.

To mount the stairs Phillip perched the girl on his shoulder and took the boy by the hand. Madeleine went ahead.

"Just a moment," she called to her husband, going quickly ahead of him. He wondered what surprise she was preparing, and waited, his eyes hidden in the fluffy petticoats of his little daughter. The small Edward presently gave a shout of delight as a man came out of Madeleine's room and passed them in the hall.

"Look, papa, that's mamma's hairdresser!"

Phillip was bewildered, but he followed the voice which called out:

"You may come now."

He deposited his burden on the floor. Already there was a feeling in his heart which had not been there when he arrived.

"Let's have a look at the babies!" he cried. "How they've grown! Doesn't the boy seem a trifle pale?"

Edward answered for himself:

"I have a red throat. Fraulein says I must go straight to bed."

"He took cold this morning, I think, at the Waldorf. Oh, Phillip," she put her arms about his neck, "there's so much to tell you I don't know where to begin."

Without rapping, Fraulein came in, and in her colourless voice said to Mrs. Dillon:

"It is time for the children to rest."

Not displeased at the idea of being alone with his wife, Phillip gave each child a kiss and a hug and told them that they might run along; when they woke he would show them what he had brought for them from the ranch. And turning to his wife he murmured:

"At last! Before we speak of anything else, let me realise the joy of seeing you, Madeleine. Just to see you is reward enough for all these weeks of exile. To see you, my darling; do you dream what it means to me?" He held her from him for a

moment, his eyes caressed her, and then he drew her to him and their lips met.

There was a sharp rap at the door.

"Dearest," Phillip laughed, "you spring away from me as though you were guilty. Nothing can exist for us to-day—no outside interruptions."

"But," she faltered, "I'm afraid—you know I didn't expect you until Saturday. There is something I have absolutely promised to do."

The rapping was repeated, and Madeleine, exasperated, went to the door. It was the waitress, who said:

"The hairdresser says he can't wait any longer; he's got to go to Mrs. Phipps-Brown's at three, and it's most that now."

Humiliated, Madeleine returned to her husband:

"Phillip, darling, do you mind? It's only the coiffeur. You see, I can't possibly back out now."

"Back out of what?"

"Why, the kermess. Haven't you read about it in the papers? I am to be at one of the principal booths, in Empire costume. Of course my hair has to be especially dressed. If I hadn't promised Mrs. Phipps-Brown and Mr. Southerland so long ago, or if I had only supposed you were coming to-day——"

Mrs. Phipps-Brown? Mr. Southerland? Kermess? Empire costume? Phillip had returned after four months, and there were other things than their love between him and his wife?



Without waiting further, the waitress showed the coiffeur in, and he started at once, aided by Madeleine, to slip out the combs and pins which held up her heavy hair. Once loose, he began to brush it and roll it up, adding a row of false curls, which he plastered to her forehead, and others which he fastened to the chignon.

Phillip was speechless. He sat where Madeleine could not see him, tormented between his desire to get up and go and the horror of leaving his wife alone with this creature, to whose professional familiarity Madeleine seemed so oblivious. Before he had decided how he could put an end to the false position, there was another invasion by a pale young girl carrying a dressmaker's box.

"Madame Ricks was sorry," she said, politely bowing, "not to send you your gown any sooner. We've been so rushed for the kermess. If you like I can stay and help you. Madame couldn't come herself."

"One minute," the coiffeur urged, as Madeleine turned her head. Putting in a few extra pins, he adjusted Bobby's tiara, upon which Phillip's eyes had been for some time fastened.

Madeleine took three dollars from her pocketbook, thanked the Frenchman, and as he departed she opened the dressmaker's box and shook out her gown, lifting the hem to see if Madame Ricks had used the same spangles as those on the waist, which were old ones Bobby had given her.

"I can't get into it alone," she said to the pale young girl, "and the maid wouldn't know where to find the hooks. I'll slip it on in the dressing-room if you will wait. I won't be long." And carrying the dress on her arm she disappeared with it.

Phillip and the pale young girl were left alone. He got up nervously and paced several times back and forth by the chimney-piece.

"Why don't you sit down?" he asked.

"I'm used to standing, thank you," was the answer, and she shifted the weight of her awkward hips from one foot to the other. Her hair was mussed and dusty, and over her black skirt there were threads and ravelled ends of silk. A bit of gray fur around her throat made her face look like a mixture of yellow wax and cinders. Phillip, fresh from the ranch, his eyes accustomed to the vigorous colour which health and exercise lash into the cheeks, was struck by this bit of *debris* from a city's vortex. In his present state of mind the very fatigue of this girl contributed to exasperate him against a combination of circumstances which was becoming unbearable.

"You have been overworked, I suppose," he said, "by this—this——"

"My! yes," she answered. "Some of us haven't had our clothes off day or night for a week, getting ready for the kermess. It's going to be grand, though."

"Poor victim!" he thought.

"Mrs. Dillon's got the prettiest dress of any one." And, as she volunteered this, Madeleine emerged from the dressing-room. The gown was amazingly becoming. Her round, bare arms and shoulders were like the ivory satin which outlined the full curves of her bust; the dress was cut very low. Under the row of curls on her forehead she looked almost babyish.

In spite of everything, Phillip could not conceal a movement of admiration. Madeleine had never seemed so lovely to him, so desirable. For a moment he loved her as he never had before. So strong was his infatuation that it made compromise with his dignity.

"Phillip, darling," Madeleine was in a flutter, "you will go with me, of course? How does it fit? It isn't ridiculous, is it? Oh!" she exclaimed, as the process of hooking up began, "it is rather tight!" But the pale young girl assured her the contrary, and to Phillip she entreated again:

"Please, dearest, do get ready."

"Get ready? My trunks are not even unlocked."

"Yes, but all your good clothes are here. I told Mary to put out your things. There's no excuse."

She did not go on until the little seamstress had left. Then, her eyes very bright, she placed her arms about Phillip's neck and whispered to him:

"You don't want me to be unhappy when you have just come home, do you?"

Relying upon her own loveliness when she was sure

of being irresistible, she, the guilty one, obtained from Phillip, almost in the form of an apology, his consent. He hurried, feeling strange enough in his long frock coat and stiff collar. From the dressing-room he called out fragments of news regarding the ranch and his sudden decision to return sooner than he had expected. Madeleine, seated where she could see herself in the mirror, put on her gloves deliberately. She was delighted with her own image. Her dress was perfection, and she studied herself in various attitudes.

"Why was it," she asked absent-mindedly, noticing that Phillip had stopped talking, "how was it you happened to take the earlier train?"

"Why, I have just been telling you. Didn't you hear?"

"It's rather hard to understand through the curtains." She was embarrassed and added at once:

"I must go and speak to Fraulein; I hear Edward coughing. We are awfully late. I am so impatient to present you to everybody!"

Once among the crowd of masqueraders, Phillip felt his anger rising again. The very fact that his wife was in costume and he was not gave him the sentiment of being an outsider. He had used all his self-control on the way over not to ask Madeleine about the jewels in her hair. He was sorry now that he had not torn them from her and made it impossible for her to come.

It no longer seemed, as it had in the carriage, that



this *fête* postponed merely for a few hours the intimacy toward which his thoughts had been bent for four long months. He felt now that Madeleine was actually separated from him; that he had a rival in the new existence she was following; that the friends who surrounded her were hostile to his happiness. He brooded. Madeleine, radiant, led him from one booth to another, showing him the work they had done in the morning, explaining how they had brought order out of chaos in no time, describing the Settlement classes to which the profits of the kermess were to be devoted, and presenting him to various friends they met on their round.

Then she returned to her booth. Bobby, resplendent in a uniform which had been sold to him as having belonged to Hoche, stationed himself familiarly under the green canopy of the improvised *salon*. Not quite mistress of herself, Madeleine was unable to establish a commonplace bond between Bobby and her husband. She had not been long enough one of a society group to have formed a money like their own. She paid in kind. She brought with her, not the coin which slips into general circulation, but specie of her own personal mint: she brought her own moral belongings as credit. So long as she had been happy her payments had been current. Now that uneasiness had taken possession of her she found suddenly that her social dealings were interrupted.

"I believe," she said to herself, "that it is really

Phillip's fault. He might make some sort of effort to attract people to him. He doesn't seem a bit like a man brought up in a city."

Compliments from the purchasers and those who had come to the fair, and the activity required in attending to them, kept her from being altogether disheartened, but so sincere was she, so incapable of the dissimulation which makes worldly grace, that even her disguise weighed upon her. If she was to be unhappy, she would rather look like herself than to be dressed up like a queen.

It was some time since Phillip had been near her. She had seen him wander off toward the opposite end of the room; she did not even know whether he had left the hall and gone home without her.

CHAPTER XXII

Husband and Wife

"The lover in the husband may be lost."—Lyttleton.

Phillip had, it is true, hardly spoken with the various friends to whom Madeleine had presented him. He had nothing to say. He found them unsympathetic—hostile, even, as though they and he were on two distinct planes of humanity.

After his exile and four months of primitive ranch life he was more than ever struck by the mania for luxury which made the women and girls about him look like fashion-plates and jewellers' windows. The velvets, the silks, the laces, the furs, the diamonds, the pearls, the gold, the precious stones gleamed and glistened before his eyes like the brilliant circles of a top whose colours vary as it spins at the slightest touch. And out of this vortex of riches and self-indulgence emerged the enchanting silhouettes of the women, vying with each other in coquetry, animated by the excitement of the moment, showing their graceful, smiling profiles, lifting their bare arms to adjust an occasional stray lock. Brilliant, nervous, they chatted with the men who bent over them, their hard, ironical faces almost meeting as they approached

closer and closer, inquisitive, insistent in the moving throng. No one was natural; no one was quite himself.

"And this," Phillip thought, "is a charity gathering. Its pretext is the poor, the homeless, the hungry, those who want work and cannot find it!"

He smiled. He was sarcastic, like the others.

"Thus the egoism of those who are happy," he said to himself, "conceals its own greed for pleasure, under the mask of philanthropy."

But his heart was heavy, his expression was somber. Into this sea of vanity, of intrigue, the woman he loved, his Madeleine, was plunged. He could not even distinguish her in the crowd of merry-makers which surged before him.

"It's evident I have become a savage on the ranch. Society is less than ever suited to my taste. I feel suffocated. My head is swimming."

He went over to an open window and gazed outward upon the night. He watched the irregular lines of the chimneys and roof-tops, outlined as they were against a sky made luminous by innumerable lights. In the days when he had wandered seeking new civilisations, seeking happiness, he had often paused to contemplate in this way the tumult of anonymous humanity whose murmur of sociability had made his loneliness more poignant. Now, he fancied he caught sight of his wife, smiling, on the arm of a gay cavalier.

"Phillip! Phillip, dear!"

He started. It was no vision, but a reflection in the mirror of the couple actually by his side.

"Phillip," Madeleine reiterated, with a slight hesitation in her tone which was not quite frank, "Mr. Southerland wants to ask you something."

Without giving Phillip a chance to respond, Bobby promptly remarked:

"I am sure, Mrs. Dillon, that you did your husband an injustice when you assured me that 'he wouldn't permit it.'"

"Permit what?" Phillip's tone was cold.

Bobby pretended not to notice the indifference of the husband. He went on with the gay assurance of a spoiled child who does not allow any one, in big things or in little things, to resist his will.

"This is the idea: while we are having supper they are going to clear away some of this truck, and then we can have a turn afterward. The floor is good; the Tziganes are ready. You can't be hard-hearted enough to take away my partner?"

Without looking at Madeleine, Phillip answered:

"My wife may do exactly as she pleases. It is for her to decide whether she wishes or not to stay for supper and the dancing."

Madeleine was in an indescribable state of mind. She would have been uneasy if Phillip had given her permission to remain, and she felt exasperated with him for letting her see so plainly what his own wishes were. Her expression had grown suddenly weary and anxious.

"No," she said hurriedly to Bobby, "I shall not take supper with you. I am going home now. The children are not well, you know. I really ought not to have come at all. Shall we start along, Phillip?"

She smiled deliciously at her husband, with a coquetry which was new to her, and which, he could not say why, made Phillip shudder.

"Oh, you husbands—you husbands," Bobby remarked flippantly, finishing what he had to say to Madeleine with a familiarity which could not but be offensive to Phillip. Madeleine responded by a forced laugh which ill-concealed her uneasiness. Her thoughts were already far from the gay hall; her presence was a mere formality.

She sank into the coupé that waited before the Waldorf, impatient to have the door shut so that she could take Phillip's hand in hers and draw close to him. The happiness of Phillip's expression made her realise that she needed reassuring as to his sentiments:

"Dearest," he said, imprisoning between his own her slender gloved hand, "explain, if you can, my sentiments. I feel exactly as I did on our wedding night, when I carried you off from your father's house, revelling in my conquest. To-night, as then, it seems as though I had snatched you from people who were hostile to our love—who wanted to keep you from being really mine!"

Madeleine was happy, yet in spite of herself she found something in these words at which to be

offended, and gently but decidedly she drew away from her husband and said:

"How can you think of comparing the devotion of a father who has brought you up and whom you are going to leave forever to the passing whim which these society people, whom I scarcely know, show to me? You can't doubt that I am perfectly indifferent to them?"

At any other time Phillip would have been astonished, annoyed at her touch of ill-humour, but he had been too long absent, he was too much in love with his wife to think of anything but communicating to her his own unbounded joy. He found the proper answer. He recaptured the white hand which, until they reached home, lay unresisting in his. They had so much to talk over after such a separation, and above all they were so content at being together again.

As soon as she entered her room Madeleine found a note placed on the table in a conspicuous place. It was in pencil, written by the children's German governess. She requested Mrs. Dillon to come up to the nursery as soon as she got in from the kermess. Madeleine feared that Edward's cold was worse, but not wanting to worry Phillip about it, she said with affected carelessness:

"It's nothing. I am going up a moment to see how things are. I will be back directly."

She had left the note open on the bureau. Phillip read it and frowned. He did not believe the

children were ill, but he had been disagreeably surprised at finding their cheeks pale, their fresh colour fading because of repeated colds.

"It was hardly worth while having a German governess if this is to be the pitiful result," he thought. "Their mother's care and the Moorlands air are decidedly more wholesome for them, and for us all!"

Madeleine did not come back at once. He went out into the hall and called her. She was talking in a low voice with the governess at the threshold of the children's room.

"Yes, yes; I am coming," she answered Phillip.

She could not, however, conceal her anxiety as she joined him. He noticed it.

"What is it, dear?" he asked.

"Edward has fever—a very high fever, and he is coughing. The nurse is frightened about him. I told her to bring him down to me. I want him to sleep by my side to-night."

Phillip adored his children, yet at this particular moment he could not suppress a feeling of irritation. It showed by the impatience of his manner as he said:

"All this seems hysterical and exaggerated. This governess, I should say, has lost her head. I shall have a look at the boy myself."

Madeleine rose hastily.

"Please don't, Phillip, I beg of you."

Surprised, he turned to her.

"Why not, pray?"

"Fraulein is in her dressing-gown, and she could not let you into her room at this hour of the night."

Already Phillip's hand was on the door-knob, but as Madeleine said this he let his arm drop:

"Madeleine! My dear Madeleine, do you realise what you are saying?"

"Forgive me, Phillip, but I know her peculiarities; she is very sensitive and touchy. She begged me please to ask you not to go up to-night. If you don't respect her wish, she will leave!"

"Well, let her leave! It would be good riddance."

"Why, Phillip, she has passed all her examinations. She was three years in a hospital studying children's diseases."

"But Edward and Kate are not diseased."

"And besides that——"

"Well, go on."

"It was Mrs. Wallace who got her for me. I had the greatest difficulty securing her. She knows all the most modern methods."

"Mrs. Wallace can find a place for her somewhere else."

There were tears in Madeleine's eyes as she said, clasping her hands:

"Oh, you wouldn't humiliate me in this way, before all my friends, by sending her away when you have not even had time to study her—this person whom everybody considers, as for as the

children are concerned, a perfect benediction in the household."

There was a silence. Then Phillip said:

"There is no reason for discussing the matter further. At some other time you can tell me who 'all these friends' are whom you feel obliged to place before your husband in your estimation. To-night you are nervous, and I am, too, no doubt. You are overexcited from your kermess. I am tired from the long journey, which I made doubly quick in order to be sooner with you. Edward needs you; you are quite right. Whether well or ill, a mother can do nothing better than to occupy herself with her children."

He spoke so tenderly that she was very much touched, and weeping she asked through her tears:

"You are not reproaching me, are you?"

"I am approving you. If a moment ago I seemed impatient it was because of my own disappointment. Come, good night!"

He kissed her affectionately. She wanted to retain him, but already he had closed the door and was gone.

CHAPTER XXIII

Love and Death

" The moving Finger writes, and having writ,
Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it."
—Omar Khayyam.

Phillip had gone to bed very much disturbed. It was the first time anything had come between him and his wife. This slight shadow, cast upon their happiness by Madeleine herself, would, he felt, be enough to keep him from closing his eyes. But the air in the Waldorf ball-room, stifling by comparison with the fresh breezes which swept from afar over the waving grass of the ranch pasture lands, had exhausted him. He was so physically worn out that he had scarcely touched the pillow before he fell fast asleep.

When he awoke it was already broad daylight.

"Poor Madeleine!" he thought, as he looked at the clock, which marked seven; "she thinks I am still angry. She certainly hurt me yesterday, but I was more severe than necessary. In any case, we are both quite sufficiently punished."

He took a hasty plunge, and without stopping to dress, jumped into his dressing-gown and went to

Madeleine's room. He had forgotten his grievances of the previous day. He was thinking only of his wife. She was sad, he knew, and he wanted to comfort her.

He pushed open the door, and before entering he stood a moment on the threshold, smiling lovingly, so that she might feel reassured as to his present state of mind. She was seated on the edge of the bed. He saw that she was trembling. With an expression of anguish she turned toward him her tear-stained face.

He went straight to her, and leaning over the bed he folded both arms around her.

"Madeleine—Madeleine, darling!" Glancing at the crib, where Edward had slept by his mother's side, he saw that it was empty.

Madeleine followed the movement of his eyes. Thinking that he was uneasy, she made an effort to smile and said:

"You were perfectly right. It was nothing, after all—just a little hoarseness. I put a hot compress on his throat and he did not cough once during the night. He is perfectly well this morning, but——"

She could not go on; there was something on her heart. She burst into tears.

Phillip was stung with keen remorse. He had judged his wife too quickly; he had been too severe with her.

"Dearest," he said, "make a little allowance for me. I had been away so long; I came back with

such a pent-up longing for you. It was only because we love each other so that we were either of us hurt by what happened."

She had put her arms about his neck, and with her face against his she sobbed:

"Oh, Phillip, it is the first time in our lives that you were ever cross with me. And you are going to be irritated again when you know why I am crying."

He drew back with a touch of uneasiness, but his tone was very gentle as he asked:

"What do you mean? Have you got other things on hand. Have you some further plan which will keep us separated as we were yesterday?"

He could not conceal behind the intentional gaiety with which he spoke that he was still deeply hurt. Madeleine felt it, and with the discouragement which weakens before any task beyond its power, she sank back among the pillows.

"Oh, what shall I do? You don't understand me! You don't approve of me. I must either wound you or give up what I believe to be my duty!"

There was a note of pain in her voice which rang true in her husband's ears.

He changed his attitude, determined neither to yield weakly to a caprice nor to be anything in this critical moment whereby Madeleine could reproach him for unkindness.

Seriously he began:

"You trust me; you love me. Tell me, what is it?"

"Read this," she answered.

She held out to him a large envelope which lay open on the bed, hidden among the clothes, where Phillip had not noticed it. His brows contracted; his breath came more quickly. Madeleine's gaze was riveted upon him while his eyes followed the written lines as though her very intensity might change the news they contained.

"How horrible!" Phillip cried, throwing back the letter on the bed. "How horrible! She must have been temporarily insane! It is the same Martha you went to school with, isn't it? The one you were so fond of—the only one of your friends I had grown to like through your letters?"

"Martha was the most exquisite creature you can imagine. I was looking forward with such joy to your knowing her." The tears came burningly as she went on. "I was sure you would be sympathetic. You would have known how to talk with her—influence her. You would have helped her. Oh! why could she not have waited?"

Phillip took up the letter, and having glanced at the signature he asked:

"Who is this Mr. Sheffield?"

"A relative—an uncle who was very fond of her. You see what he says."

Slipping the letter from Phillip's hand, she turned it over and read:

"And though I was far from supposing the awful truth, I was terrified by the despatch which I received. I dropped everything and came as fast as I could. It was too late. She had taken steady aim; the ball had gone through her right temple and was lodged in the brain. Her features were not even convulsed. Death must have been instantaneous."

Madeleine let fall the written page and hid her face in her hands. It was as though Martha had suddenly risen before her: the charming head; the eyes whose expression one could not forget; the delicate forehead, cold now—cold as a stone, and because Martha herself had so wished it. It was this thought which stung Madeleine to the depths of her warm, living heart.

"This Mr. Sheffield"—Phillip spoke slowly—"refers here to a letter which they found written to you by his niece before she committed the dreadful act. You haven't received any letter, have you? Where is it? What did she say?"

Without responding, Madeleine put her hand under the pillow and drew out a small envelope sealed with a crested monogram. She gave it to her husband, who before opening it studied the address:

"To be given to Madeleine Dillon as soon as they have found me in my room."

The writing was unsteady and irregular. It showed a soul on the verge of perdition. Phillip's

eyes were lifted, and his mind had wandered away into the past. He was thinking of bygone days. A disturbing memory rushed back of hours when his own state of mind had been similar to Martha's; before he had taken the rudder of existence into his own hands; before he had found, through his respect for Nature and her comforting laws, that love of living which sometimes deserts with a sudden infidelity the selfish and the rebellious.

Madeleine, not quite understanding his hesitation, said to Phillip:

"Read it. There is no especial confidence which I feel obliged to keep. Whatever last message poor Martha may have sent is for us both."

Martha had made no pretense of writing a letter. The hour and her own thoughts were not conducive.

"I leave this," was all she said, "as a farewell to you, Madeleine. You have a husband and children who love you and depend upon you. You have found your destiny. Do not ever be tempted from it. I have missed mine. That is why I am putting an end to it all."

Phillip had followed with his eyes as Madeleine read. Aloud he repeated:

"'You have found your destiny; never be tempted from it.'"

Through his tears he looked at Madeleine, and as though by some irresistible impulse they fell into each other's arms.

"Madeleine!" he murmured. "Madeleine, my darling, my wife!"

She whispered his name lovingly, shaken as she was by sobs.

When they could speak it was Phillip who said:

"Do you love them, Madeleine—the husband, the children, who can save you forever from despair if you only see where your happiness lies?"

"Oh, Phillip, don't recall now my happiness. I can think of nothing but her death, and it seems as though I should almost be ashamed of my own joy, like something selfish."

Tenderly he held his hand across her lips.

"Don't mourn, beloved. Receive this message as a benediction from another world. You were connected with the last happy thought which this poor child carried from a world wherein she could no longer endure to live."

He stopped, contemplating the dear wife, so touching in the abandon of her grief, and he waited that his own heartfelt words might sink down deep into her soul.

Folding her hands in supplication, she begged:

"Phillip, let me go to her house. I am sure they have not touched her yet. I want to see her a last time."

She started to get up; he held her back lovingly, firmly.

"It is not toward death that she herself urges you to turn: it is toward life. You can do nothing

more for her except to cherish her memory. Do not return to her. Stay with us who are living. Open wide your eyes, as she tells you, upon your husband and your children, who seek their ideals and their reward, their justification in the peace of your expression. It is in you, through you, and because of you, Madeleine, that we choose to live."

Choked with emotion, he pronounced those last words almost in a whisper. He had knelt down by the bedside; his arms were about his wife. Slowly from her eyes, which had wept such bitter tears, to the half-parted lips, his kiss descended.

"It is love," he murmured, as the rose unfolded to the sun's ardent touch—"it is love which must repair the ravages of death."

CHAPTER XXIV

A Turning

"The end is not yet."—*Matt.* xxiv, 6.

When Reginald Stone reached the club that afternoon he found a letter waiting for him. The envelope was small and rough. It was sealed with violet wax. Without looking at the writing, he knew at once that it was from Grace Westervelt, and his expression was almost one of alarm. For over a year he and Howard Starrton had devoted themselves to her, and no one could tell, themselves least of all, which held the favoured place in the affections of the captivating young girl.

As a rule, Reginald tore open like a flash these small envelopes which brought him orders as imperative as those received on the battle-field by a lieutenant from his general-in-chief. To-day, slightly pale, he slipped the note into his pocket unopened.

"It's her answer," he said to himself.

These lines which would decide his future fate he wished to read when alone.

Quickly he crossed the billiard-room and went into the library, which, as usual, was deserted. There he sat down near a window. He glanced hastily about

to see if there were anybody noticing him, and then he broke the seal of the letter and began the perusal of the message which meant everything to him.

On the square of paper before his eyes there were just four lines:

"Wait for me at the club. I will come for you at four in the 'bubble.' We can have a spin together. I may bring you back to dinner with me. It depends upon how I feel and whether you deserve it."

At the foot of the page, in large, scrawling characters, the word "noon" was written.

Stone reflected an instant and then concluded:

"This was sent before she had received my letter."

He hardly knew whether he was glad or sorry. At all events, he was disappointed, for he had summoned all the courage of which he could dispose in order to send this ultimatum to the girl whom he loved with a devotion which kept him from thinking of anything else. And opposed to his disappointment was a feeling of relief, for his own letter had no sooner gone than he wished it back again. If Grace took him literally and refused ever to see him again, what could become of him?

He pulled out his watch and compared it to the clock on the library mantelpiece; both marked three.

"There's not much longer to wait, and by this time she has surely read me."

He opened a magazine and tried to fix his attention upon a chance article.

His message had, as a matter of fact, just been delivered at Grace's. The maid-servant who brought it up to her mistress found her absorbed in trying on before the long mirror in her dressing-room a new automobiling coat. Mrs. Dillon, stationed by the fireplace, was looking on. She had stopped in passing to thank Grace for some flowers. Grace insisted that she come up for a moment.

Glancing at the tray as the maid presented it to her, she recognised Reggie Stone's handwriting and frowned. Does this mean that he was not to be at her immediate disposition? She could not well seriously distract her attention from the all-important question as to exactly what length the coat should be made, so she held out the letter to Madeleine and said:

"Read it for me. What does he write?"

"Why," exclaimed Madeleine, looking at the signature, "it's from Reginald Stone."

Grace shrugged her shoulders.

"All the more reason. Reggie never has anything interesting to say for himself."

Madeleine began, but had not gone farther than the first line when she stopped again.

"I don't know," she said, "but it seems to me that this is rather confidential."

And as though to explain herself, she turned her eyes toward the dressmaker, who, on her knees,

her mouth full of pins, was carefully fitting the long garment.

Grace promptly insisted:

"Don't bother about her—she doesn't understand English. Reggie says he can't go in the bubble, I suppose?"

Her voice was commanding. With an accent of reproach Madeleine responded:

"He writes to say that he—loves you."

"That's no news." Grace smiled as she said this and gave a satisfied glance at herself in the mirror.

"Go on. He wouldn't mind—and you seem so well disposed toward poor Reggie!"

Madeleine read out:

"*My Dear Grace*:

"It is three years ago yesterday since I first met you; three years that I have been telling you constantly how great my admiration for you is; three years that you have been encouraging me. You know that I care for you so much that whether you smile at me or look at me with scorn it makes no difference so long as I can be near you. Don't think that my patience is at an end; like my devotion, it is inexhaustible. If I were the only one in question, I would wait. I would wait indefinitely, until the day when your heart was touched at last and you felt that you wanted to reward my devotion. But I am not alone, Grace, in my attentions. There are two of us—two of us whom you lead on and rebuff in the same manner;

two whom you play off one against the other with a coquetry which may amuse you, but which I can assure you is not far from cruel. I can fancy you frowning as you read this. You will probably look to see if Howard Stanton and I have both signed it—if it is a petition. No, Grace, it is not a petition; it is a supplication. Man loves according to the fiber he is made of. I admit that Howard is better-natured than I. He can laugh at things which plunge me into despair. Perhaps that is the sort of temperament you prefer. Then say so, Grace. I entreat you, out of pity for me, tell the truth. I can't promise you to change: it wouldn't be true. It is too late now to tear this love from my heart, but at least you will not have to reproach yourself with dragging me after you like a dangling weight.

"Listen, Grace—hear me! Decide once for all whether you wish to save me, to resuscitate me, or whether you mean to give me up and see me sink into perdition.

"I was a long time making up my mind to write this letter, which will perhaps displease you, and which, in any case, must decide my fate one way or the other. But I am at the end of my courage, and that, I am quite aware, without your even suspecting it.

"I love you. I want you to be my wife."

Madeleine had read the end of the letter, which was so evidently genuine, with a slight trembling in her voice. Miss Westervelt did not seem in the least moved.

"Is that all?" she asked with perfect calm.

"Doesn't he answer my question? I wanted him to go with me in the automobile at three."

"Grace!" There was a shade of reproach in Madeleine's tone. "How can you be so hard-hearted? Don't you see that this poor boy loves you?"

"Howard loves me, too," was the answer.

Mrs. Dillon was shocked.

"And you? You prefer one of them to the other?"

"I always like best the one who is not there! When I hear Howard laughing at everything, it seems to me as though Reggie's melancholy had the charm of moonlight; but as soon as I am alone with him, he is such a grumbler I decide that gay people are the only ones that make life endurable. So you see we have a happy combination. I always take both Howard and Reggie with me wherever I go. Neither is the favourite, so neither has any right to be jealous! It isn't my fault if neither is sufficient in himself. I'm not to blame that they only please me in pairs. Sometimes I wonder whether I could ever choose between them. All men are more or less alike. Just at present my true love is the machine. I don't care for anything else. There is a sort of intoxication you get when you go very fast which nothing else can give you—above all, not the conversation of my two poor dear twins."

The dressmaker had gone. Grace fastened a cape on, and over it a veil in which there were two trans-

parent plaques of glass opposite her eyes. On the door-step she said good-by to Mrs. Dillon.

"Shall I drop you at the house?"

"No," Madeleine thanked her. "I am going to see how Alida is getting on."

Grace did not hear. She was in the automobile and already shaken by its thundering vibrations.

A moment later she stopped on the corner below the University Club. Through the mica eye-glasses, Stone, as he joined her, could see the ironical smile with which Grace greeted him.

The mechanician had jumped down from his place by Grace's side, and Reginald took the seat after shaking timidly the hand which Miss Westervelt, absorbed by the machine, held out without looking at him.

She started toward Central Park, threading her way among cabs and trucks, not speaking until they had spun out of the Park at 110th Street. Then she doubled the speed, and deigning to turn toward her companion she asked:

"What have you been doing since I saw you?"

In a low voice he answered: "I have written a love-letter to you. Did you read it?"

"I read it and tore it up. I supposed that was the best thing to do, wasn't it?"

There was the suggestion of a threat in her voice. Reginald felt it. He made no response. Grace had torn his letter up. It was nothing to her. There was nothing changed in the situation, which

he found unbearable, and which, nevertheless, with the cowardice of love, he preferred to a rupture. Anything would be better than the shock of never seeing her again. After all, it was a great favour merely to be allowed to sit there, mute and resigned, beside this haughty young woman, who condescended to his accompanying her in what she most enjoyed, who spoke to him less often and much less amicably than she did to the mechanician.

Grace was quite right in saying that automobiling intoxicated her more than any amount of champagne. She had always been a spoiled child, but even the most capricious and self-willed are sure to encounter some opposition sooner or later—a person or circumstance that bars the way like a stone wall. It may be a friend, who dares to be ill at the very time you counted on him for a pleasure party. It may be your favourite horse, which goes lame at the instant you were having it harnessed for a pressing errand. The automobile, on the contrary, gave Grace a feeling that it had been invented for the express purpose of serving her with the blind, mad, anonymous devotion of a slave. She did not need to show it any gratitude for the effort it made, nor to be considerate of it. It was ready to attack no matter what obstacle, living or inanimate. A slight turn of the wheel could send it into the lake. When she pushed it to its full speed, her ears roaring, the air beating and breaking its force against her face, it seemed to her that she

was one with her own machine. The pneumatic wheels, so soft, so elastic, were like a continuation of herself, and she, the center of the prodigious force launched at a mad pace, had the delicious consciousness of her own will, free as a bird and yet all-powerful.

They left the city, crossing the Fort Lee ferry, and taking the river road. Between occasional clumps of trees and the double rows of telegraph-poles heavily weighted with their many lines of wires the automobile sped on. They mounted the hills without slowing up. They plunged down the inclines. The huge letters of the advertisements posted by the wayside glided past right and left like an illegible streak of printing. Reginald gave up trying to read them. His thoughts, attracted mechanically by what Grace was doing, remained fixed upon her effort. Apprehension, the instinct of self-preservation, kept his attention on the alert.

The mechanician was on his feet behind them. He did not take his eyes from Grace, her management of the wheel, and the direction they were following. Every now and then he murmured in a resolute but respectful voice:

"Too fast, miss! You must slow down."

In the distance there was a turning. The road went off right and left. Grace watched it approach. Bending her head forward against the wind, she turned to Reggie.

"Do you know where we are going?"

"No."

"I found out this morning that your twin had started off on Bobby's coach without asking my permission. Such insubordination was too much for me. I sent him a telegram on the spot, and he gave up his little party on the way. We shall find him here at the inn to the left. I will take you both to town. You can sit in the back with him; the mechanician can sit here next to me."

Her sentences were short and broken. They reached Reggie by fragments and it made them all the more ferocious.

Stone touched Grace's arm.

"Is this your answer, Grace?"

"What answer?"

"To my letter."

"Let go my arm!"

He paid no attention.

"I wish you to stop the machine, Grace."

"Why?"

"I shall either get down or jump down. I have had enough. You have made game of me now for the last time."

She shrugged her shoulders, too intoxicated by her own power at the moment to take heed of this masculine whim.

"I won't stop," she called to him. "You are to come back with me in the *tonneau*. I need you. The machine runs badly with three. You and Stanton balance each other."

Stealthily, swiftly they advanced toward the turning in the road.

"Miss Westervelt"—it was the mechanician who spoke—"if you are going to take the turn you must slow down here!"

She heard him and was about to do what he asked. She did not have time. Reginald put his hand on the wheel to keep her either from slacking speed or from directing her machine toward the inn where Stanton was waiting for them. Surprised, she resisted. There was a struggle. There was a struggle of a second. Then a sudden flash through their minds that this was the end—a terrible crash, the beginning of pain, then darkness and oblivion.

. . . . . .

Howard Stanton, it was quite true, waited at the Briarcliff Inn, drinking one cocktail after another to pass the time until they should arrive. Bobby had jeered at him for his meekness; the other people on the coach had made fun of him. He was preparing a very cutting, witty remark with which he intended to greet his friends, when a sudden cry from the house-servant brought him in haste to the porch of the house.

"What has happened?"

"There's a man been killed down there! Oh, it's something terrible!" And almost fainting the maid fell into a chair.

Through the streams of blood which poured from

an open wound in his forehead over his face, his arms, his clothes torn and dust-covered, Stanton recognised Grace's mechanician.

"Where's Miss Westervelt?" he shouted.

The man seemed half-mad; he could not speak. He made a vague gesture in the direction whence he had come. Bareheaded, his heart beating so fast that he could hardly lift his feet, Howard ran down the road. He had about a quarter of a mile to go. An embankment covered with trees hid the turning from him. Suddenly he came upon all.

Under the automobile, which was smashed and overturned, something lay crushed. Howard went first to it. He knew that it was Reginald. He understood also that the end had come instantaneously; he had been caught in the terrible shock between the ground and the full weight of the vehicle. He leaned over to look at his friend and drew back with a sob. Never could he forget what he saw. The head was cut in two above the eyes, gray and dead, as though the body and soul of the once Reginald were returning already to dust.

Howard wrung his hands.

"And Grace? Where was Grace?"

She had been hurled into the long, thick grass by the wayside. She was almost hidden in it, lying on her back. Her eyes were shut, her mouth open. There was neither blood nor dust on her body. The cap was still fastened over her blonde hair. Howard fell on his knees beside her. He leaned

over her. He tore open the heavy coat and bodice, trying to find if she were still alive. But either because he was frenzied, or because the end had come for her as for Reginald, he could not tell whether Grace's heart was still throbbing; he could not even find the place where it should beat.

CHAPTER XXV

Grace Expiates

"And then it started like a guilty thing upon a fearful summons."—Hamlet.

Ever since the day when Grace had been carried home more dead than alive, Howard Stanton had not put his foot inside of her house, not even to ask how she was. He was not indifferent: he was hostile. Twenty times during the day and as a nightmare when he slept he saw a poor, bloody, crushed thing under an automobile, gray with dust from the road.

"That is her work," he thought. "Why did she do it? For no reason under the sun. My devotion, Stone's love did not afford her even a passing pleasure."

His brows contracted and his face for a moment became hard and set. He remembered certain brutally selfish actions on Grace's part which should have been sufficient to enlighten any man less infatuated with her than Stone, upon the egoism of the woman in whose heart he hoped to gain a place. Howard's recollections were so vivid, so cruel that he sometimes felt absolute hatred.

"It was she," he murmured between his teeth,

"who ought to have perished in the road like an obnoxious animal—one of the bloodthirsty beasts who are caught in a trap and tossed out dead by the wayside."

One morning, when he was more than ever beset by haunting memories, and had decided to lunch alone at home, unable to endure the gossiping of the clubs, Mrs. Lemon was announced and insisted upon seeing him.

They were not at all intimate, but for a long time he had felt sympathetically drawn toward this gray-haired woman who exhaled tranquillity from her very person. He recollected snatches of conversation which he had overheard in passing her at some reunion or other. He could hear her clear, calm voice as she pronounced an opinion, insignificant in itself, but always, no matter what the subject, bearing the mark of loyalty and true kindliness. And he wondered that he had never been even to call upon Mrs. Lemon, who was a friend of all his friends; why he had not tried to get better acquainted with her at the various houses where they met every winter.

"Grace is to blame for it," he thought. "Like everything else, it is her fault. She kept us dangling in such a fashion that it was impossible to seriously follow up or undertake anything whatever."

"You aren't surprised?" Mrs. Lemon exclaimed, holding out her hand as they showed her into Howard's den. "You aren't shocked at my in-

sisting to be let in? You know I have a weakness for those who suffer. I have come on a charity mission. I know how generous you are!"

As she talked she rested upon Howard her eyes, whose melancholy was veiled by a smile which, once merely forced by courtesy for others, had, with time, become natural. Howard felt the magnetic charm of this expression, fascinating like her voice, and before Mrs. Lemon had further explained the object of her visit he was as grateful to her as though she had touched with cool hands his fiery wound.

"You know," he said, "that I am yours to command."

She nodded her thanks and said:

"For the past two weeks I have been witness to the most terrible suffering. The victim of it is surrounded by every possible luxury. The greatest doctors have been called to prescribe for her; there are men-servants and maids to wait upon her and carry out her merest whim or desire. Yet such misery I have never seen, not even in the tenements, where the poor are so crowded together that Death has to jostle them all when he wishes to possess himself of one."

The emotion suggested by a slight break in Mrs. Lemon's voice communicated itself to Howard. He knew to whom the compassionate Mrs. Lemon referred, and he said nothing.

"The poor wounded creature of whom I am speaking," she went on, "has no scars, no bruises.

Her injury is moral, so it is useless for the doctors to examine her. There is nothing that even the most skilful hands can do."

With an effort to smile, he said:

"She is exhausted. I am not surprised—after such a fall!"

Instantly Mrs. Lemon caught hold of his arm.

"Don't close your heart to pity, Mr. Stanton. You know perfectly that the malady of which Grace Westervelt is dying by inches is not physical."

"What is it, then?"

Almost severely Mrs. Lemon said:

"She is being killed by remorse and love."

"Remorse?"

"Yes. Whatever her faults may be, her present humiliation deserves respect."

Mrs. Lemon was not preaching; she was simply stating the truth.

Howard's head sank on his breast. It was not all in an instant that he could replace the insolently coquettish Grace of his memories by this image of remorse and despair.

"She does well to weep," he said at last. "She destroyed a life."

"She ruined two lives—her own as well as the other. I don't say this to work upon your feelings; it is an absolute fact. Grace may have come unharmed, without scratch or bruise, from the fearful accident. It is none the less true that her heart is broken. She cannot, she will not live.

Even justice accords to the condemned their last wish."

Growing a shade pale, he asked:

"Did Grace want something of me?"

"She wants to see you."

"When?"

"The sooner the better."

"You don't mean to-day?"

"I led her to hope that you might return with me."

. . . . . .

In the street, before Grace's door, there was a heavy layer of tanbark. It was like a petition addressed to the city in general to diminish its headlong speed as it approached the poor creature who was repaying by slow torture her greed for futile excitement. Mrs. Lemon noticed that this detail impressed Howard.

"We got the police," she said, "to let us do all we could to stifle the noise. She cannot endure the sound of wheels. Day and night she is haunted by the rumbling of tires, and she cannot rest a moment. The doctors say that if it goes on it will either kill her or she will lose her mind."

The bell also was tied up. A butler was on the lookout for visitors. He opened cautiously and let Mr. Stanton into the reception-room, while Mrs. Lemon went up to tell the invalid and prepare her for the emotion of seeing Howard.

One of the photographs on the table in the room where Stanton waited represented Miss Westervelt

in the fatal automobile which had hurled them out on the river road. The carriage was entirely covered, the seats as well as the wheels, with flowers for the automobile show. Stone and Stanton were in the back as ballast, and the young girl, next to the mechanician, her hands on the steering apparatus, looked out of the picture with the elusive smile, half-ironical, half-ecstatic, which had played about her lips from the day of her birth to the hour of doom. Howard turned from it. He was lost in thought when Mrs. Lemon came down to say that Grace was waiting for him.

As though in distress he asked:

"But you are going up with me, aren't you?"

She shook her wise gray head.

"Grace wants to be alone with you."

And as he passed her she added in a low voice:

"Don't be too hard on her."

As Howard mounted the stairs in the silent house it seemed to him as though he were carrying the weight of a body, lifeless, as it had been on the day of the accident.

On the threshold of the room, which was darkened, he hesitated a moment.

Although it was early in the afternoon, the blinds and shades were drawn down and the heavy velvet curtains were hermetically closed. There was not even a lamp on the table, and as it was not cold the fire had not been lighted. Stanton, coming from the brilliant sunshine, was so dazed that he could

only feel his way over to the lounge. A slight odour of ether which hung about the room indicated where the invalid was.

"Grace," he said gently.

With the tenacity of a drowning woman she clutched his outstretched hand.

"Oh, Howard," she said, "thank you for coming. I needed your pardon. From the tomb I can have no answer, no forgiveness—that is terrible enough to bear."

Her sentence ended in a groan—in one of those hopeless cries which no longer demand relief, but which are simply the yearning for an end of suffering through oblivion.

Speaking with a frankness that came from the fullness of his heart, he said:

"I have no pardon to grant you. This awful catastrophe has suddenly brought things to light which we neither of us understood. We were both purely frivolous before it happened. We were playing a sort of game. We each had a *rôle:* mine was devotion; yours was scorn. We aided and abetted each other in our idle craving for excitement. But Reggie—Reggie loved you."

He had no sooner pronounced the words than he seemed to hear, like an inward reproach, the voice of Mrs. Lemon, saying: "Don't be too hard on her."

Yet in his outburst of sincerity he had not inflicted a new wound upon the girl. On the contrary, whereas a moment before her head had lain

inert among the cushions, she now lifted herself quickly. Out of the shadows, herself nothing more than a shadow, she moved toward him. And it was this single sentence, "Reggie loved you," which wrought the miracle. Stanton felt that Grace wanted to hear the vital words again, and as though she had begged it of him he repeated:

"Reggie loved you, Grace."

Like the house-bell, like everything in the house, the clock on the mantelpiece had stopped. Howard was appalled by the silence, which his voice alone disturbed. He wondered whether it were not all a dream, whether he were talking with a living person, or whether he had spoken aloud to the cold occupant of a sepulcher. The voice which answered came from some life beyond the earth. Colourless, dreary, it responded:

"Yes, I believe he did love me."

In the street below a rumbling could be heard—the sound of pneumatic wheels smothered by the covering of tanbark. With a half-frantic gesture Grace put her hands to her ears, but not in time to shut out the clanging of the automobile bell claiming right of way. As it reached her she uttered a sharp cry. Stanton feared she was going to faint. He had just time enough to reach out his arms and catch her, preventing her head from striking against the wall.

"Grace!" he begged. "Grace—don't, I beg of you!"

She let fall her arms, and for a moment remained as though listening.

"It is my punishment!" she murmured. "It is killing me!"

And laying hold of the man by her side she began feverishly:

"As long as I live, until the hour when my eyes are sealed forever, I shall see that turning in the road—our turning! I had planned the whole thing just to torture him—because he had dared to write me that he loved me, that he wanted to marry me. I decided to play him off against you. Instead of answering him tenderly, loyally, something human, I delighted in teasing his patience to the extreme."

Stanton's eyes were growing accustomed to the obscurity of the room. He could distinguish her now in all the details of her attitude. She was as though haunted; her knees were drawn up under her; her hands, weary of holding her burning brows, clutched the mass of her hair.

She went on in the same slow, measured tone:

"When he found out that it was you we were going to meet at the turning—you whom I was holding up to him so falsely as a rival, he rebelled. Oh, poor Reggie! He wanted to take the wheel from me. I resisted him. I sent the machine ahead faster than ever, and I was already going like mad. But pain and jealousy and indignation had made him lose his head, too. The crash, the shock,

and death itself all came too quickly for him to realise that it was the end. Even though we were struggling one against the other in that brief instant of time, we both felt in our innermost souls exactly the same thing. He would rather have died than to have gone and joined you, and I would rather have killed myself than give up what I wanted to do."

The horror of it silenced her. She could see the road. She started like a sensitive horse that shys at a dead body.

Stanton felt himself invaded by pity. It fell like a shroud over the two unfortunates. He pronounced these words as they occurred to him:

"Fate was in a great measure responsible for what happened."

Grace rested on his arm a hand which was like a shadow hand. After the excitement she had shown, her sudden gentleness terrified him.

"Thank you," she repeated—"thank you. You say that because you used to be fond of me and because you are sorry for me now. But Fate had nothing to do with it at all, or rather it was I who was Fate, Reggie's Fate. For better or for worse he had trusted his life to me. I might have made him happy. It was I who killed him."

Her voice grew faint.

"He died in despair! There is one thing which would satisfy him if he could know it. He wanted me for his own. And I shall be his—I shall be dust

by his ashes. I shall die his death. I am bound for eternity to his memory."

Stanton's forehead was bowed over Grace's hands and she could feel that he was weeping.

"Howard," she said, "it seems as though you were weeping for us both. That is what I want most of all—to be united with him in the thoughts of such a friend as you were."

She placed her hand on his head. He did not lift it to show his tears.

"I am going to ask you," she said, "to promise me that if I die you will carry out my last will. You don't need to promise; your tears are a sufficient pledge. With the little energy I have left in me I wish to do something to perpetuate the memory of him who loved me—Reggie's memory. Sometimes when I was not too severe with him he used to tell me about college and the different sports he went in for at Princeton. You know he was the champion runner. What I would like is to build a memorial for him—a gymnasium in his name. You will help me, won't you, Howard? I shall give everything I have to keeping it up perfectly. You will help me to make the plans and decide what is best? Nothing is enough to give—life, and youth, and health! We might both of us have been happy; now I must expiate because I have loved too late."

CHAPTER XXVI

The Last Meeting

"One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not."—Ecclesiastes.

It was May before the Lunch Club resumed its regular meetings. Madeleine received a notice from Mary Evans, stating that the committee had decided that she should be the hostess on this next occasion.

All winter she had been looking forward to her turn with anxiety and delight. There were various points upon which city life had enlightened her, and she was eager to show the women who had entertained her that she knew as well as any one how things should be arranged and served. Another thing also gave her inward satisfaction. She recollected the day when Mrs. Wallace had taken her for the first time to Alida's. Everything had dated from that day. Up to then she had been only a child, the mere echo of her husband. "I followed him like a shadow," she thought. "I expected him to give me everything that a soul and body could need. I was *his* wife, the mother of *his* children. No one had ever made me see that I might be something on my own account; that I

was a creature as important as the rest; and that if I was willing to make part of a general group, it should be on condition that I have a life of my own, where my individuality should be given some play."

Madeleine would have given anything if Phillip could have come to this meeting of the Lunch Club. He could learn more about her state of mind in one afternoon than she could ever explain to him. Seeing her with all these clever women, he would realise that she had changed; that she was no longer the simple, foolish little person he had married.

"I have got beyond the point," she thought, "where I will do anything for a smile and accept any excuse given with a kiss! I have entered into an entirely new phase. Phillip does not seem aware of it, or if he does perceive that I have made progress in many ways he is the opposite of pleased."

Almost immediately after the first exchange of tenderness, Phillip and Madeleine had resumed toward each other the attitude of antipathy, mutual misunderstanding and irritation which had been so painful on his return. As soon as they began to discuss any current topic, any question concerning the children's bringing up or health, any plan for the future, it seemed as though the spirit of contradiction glided between the husband and wife, delighted in showing them the same objects under totally different colours, and in

studying with malicious pleasure the discord of this once united couple.

There were moments when Madeleine longed to throw herself into Phillip's arms and say:

"You are unhappy and so am I! Whose fault is it? Speak to me; I will do what you ask."

There were other times when she wanted to make her husband feel that she was intellectually emancipated, and that she would not submit again to the sort of domination he used to exercise over her. She was in the latter state of mind when Mary Evans's note arrived, whetting her taste for independence. She waited, however, until the last minute before telling Phillip that the Lunch Club was to be held there that day.

He had spoken of some business matter which might keep him occupied downtown, and Madeleine was inwardly rejoicing, as Phillip, once the meeting was over, could do nothing about it. But his business engagement did not come off, and he announced contentedly that he would lunch at home, so Madeleine had to divulge her plans.

"Can't I come to the club?" he asked.

She frowned.

"Of course not. Men never come!"

"Is it against the rules?"

Irritated at his insistence, she answered:

"I don't suppose the question has ever been put before. Martha and Grace had no husbands; Mary Evans's father is blind; Mr. Lemon is an

invalid; Penfold does not care for anything but his painting; Mr. Phipps-Brown isn't even interested in his wife's occupations; and Mr. Wallace is a sort of unknown quantity—he's always away on business!"

Phillip nodded approvingly, and without too apparent irony he asked:

"And in which of these catalogues do you place me, with the husbands who no longer amount to anything or with those who never did exist?"

Piqued at this, she answered impulsively:

"I class you with the tyrants! What did you expect me to do while you were away, sit down in the middle of my room and weep? You know that I missed you from morning to night! My letters were loving, weren't they? But I had to do something with myself. I thought I had made an admirable choice in spending my time with women who help the poor and cultivate their own intellects so highly. It is perfectly natural that by associating with them I should have changed somewhat. I no longer turn to the right or the left like a weather-cock, as I used to when you married me!"

Phillip could not control an exclamation of disappointment.

"Madeleine!" he cried. "You don't mean what you are saying. Do you think you are just to me?"

She was not disarmed.

"I don't mean you in particular. I mean everybody who brought me up. There was never any

question of my own self-development. It was always what I could be and do for others. It was here, this winter, for the first time I realised that I had a mind of my own, and that if I made use of it my learning and judgment would be of benefit to others; it would help them to progress, my children first of all. You will at least admit, I suppose, that I can be something more than a nurse. Edward and Kate have a right to profit by the discoveries in hygiene. You wouldn't want them to grow up like wild flowers, when they can have the benefit of all these modern scientific systems?"

"You refer, I suppose," said Phillip, "to the systems that have been such a perfect success with Ballestier Wallace?"

Madeleine was growing excited.

"I am talking seriously," she cried, her nervousness increasing as she spoke. "If instead of discouraging me, as though the only thing you cared for in me were ignorance and submission, you upheld me in the self-development I am trying to attain, you would soon find yourself with a wife capable of discussing with you the great problems of life—morals, education, and the rest. You would have a true companion and equal, instead of a child somewhat older than the babies, as I was when we left the Moorlands."

"I am already able to taste the fruits of this 'superior culture' to which you refer." Phillip's tone was disheartened. "I find them bitter. But

you don't accuse me vainly of being tyrannical. If I have been selfish, it was unconscious on my part. Carry out your experiment to the end. I shall not oppose you. God grant that at least to you it may bring happiness."

Madeleine suddenly felt distressed.

"Phillip," she said, "you disapprove of what I am doing, don't you?"

Putting his hand on her delicate wrist, as though to give his words weight, he answered:

"I don't wish to oppose my will or judgment against yours in anything. Go on to the end of your experiment—but not so far, I beg of you, as Martha and Grace and Alida, or Mrs. Phipps-Brown. They are aware of their individual rights and of what they owed themselves in self-development. But that is not the question. You have been entertained at the club by these other women, and I quite understand that you wish to receive them here in turn. That is perfectly right, and I should be out of place with them; but you won't let your feminine reunion turn me out of the house entirely, will you? I can have my lunch with the children in the nursery?"

Madeleine was exasperated at this.

"You spoil all my pleasure," she said. "What do you suppose I care now for the Lunch Club? You are making fun of me. You are cruel."

He looked tenderly at her.

"Surely," he answered, "you can't accuse me of

wanting to hurt you? My feelings are so simple. For months I have been without you and the children. Now that I have found you alone, I don't want you out of my sight!"

The interest Madeleine was obliged to take in arranging details for the lunch distracted her somewhat from the unpleasant feelings her conversation with Phillip had aroused.

When lunch was over the meeting began with a reading of the minutes by Mary Evans, the club secretary. As she finished, somebody asked if Mrs. Phipps-Brown had been notified of the reunion.

"She did not answer my letter," Mary Evans responded.

"I think," said Madeleine, "that she is not going anywhere. Between her divorce and second marriage she is rather absorbed."

"Her marriage?" exclaimed Mrs. Lemon. "Whom is she going to marry?"

"Can't you imagine?" Madeleine responded. "Bobby Southerland, of course. I have known it ever since that night we spent at the Country Club."

A slight flush tinged her cheeks. There was a silence. It was Mrs. Lemon who spoke first.

"I am sure you all feel as I do. We can't go on with the club. After what has happened, it seems as though there were some kind of a malediction upon us. I propose that this be our last meeting, at least for some time to come. I don't believe we should ever have the courage to resume again."

"I am not discouraged." It was Mary Evans who said this in her argumentative voice. "I don't see why we need be affected by what has happened to our members. The fact that one has been ill, another divorced, another the victim of fast driving, and another too weak to continue the battle of life, has nothing to do with the usefulness of the club."

"Such things might have happened to anybody," Mrs. Wallace affirmed. "Until we have scientifically mastered the laws of existence, we shall all be more or less victims of chance."

"Chance?" said Mrs. Lemon. "I use that word more and more sparingly every day. We are each of us, I believe, far more than we ourselves know, the masters of our own lives."

"And what conclusion do you draw, then, from the tragic incidents which you wish to make an excuse for breaking up the club?"

The discussion was becoming uncomfortable. Mrs. Lemon made her tone as indifferent as possible.

"I don't know, Mary. They may contain a warning to some of us."

"A warning of what?"

"Yes, of what?" echoed Mrs. Wallace. "We have had only the very highest purpose in view since the club was founded. We made a mistake, perhaps, not to restrict the membership solely to those who think as we do!"

This remark having put an end to any further conversation, Mrs. Wallace and Mary took leave.

Ballestier had not been well. His mother was somewhat anxious about him.

When they had gone, Madeleine turned to Mrs. Lemon.

"I don't know why it is," she said, "but I feel as though I were to blame for something. I've got a guilty conscience. Please stay and talk with me for a while. It will be a charity on your part."

They spoke naturally of Grace and of Martha. Madeleine went and found the letter she had received and read it to her friend. Touched at the parting message, Mrs. Lemon repeated several times:

"You have a husband and children. You have found your natural destiny. Mine I have missed. Martha is right," she murmured. "What she says reaches us in the turmoil of life like an echo from another world. Take heed of it, Madeleine."



CHAPTER XXVII

On the Operating-Table

"Et n'etre qu'un homme qui passe,
Tenant son enfant par la main."
—Victor Hugo.

When Mrs. Wallace got back from Madeleine's she was already late. It was her custom to read for an hour with Ballestier before he had his supper. Going hurriedly to the nursery, she was surprised to find it dark. The boy generally was waiting for her, with his book open at the place where they had stopped the preceding night. It was the first time he had failed her. Somewhat provoked, as she had hurried herself, Fraulein being absent on her yearly holiday, she called sharply:

"Ballestier!"

No answer came, but at her second cry it seemed as though a slight groan sounded from the child's bedroom. Knowing that he was incapable of playing a practical joke, she felt her way uneasily to the room at the end of the hall. Here the gas was lighted. Its green flame, turned low, flickered under the round glass globe, and its rays fell aslant the pale face of Ballestier. Contracted with pain, his knees drawn up against his chest, his eyes moving restlessly and his brows knit together, he

tossed from one side to the other of his narrow bed, moaning the while.

"Mamma! Mamma!" He held out his hand to her.

"My son—Ballestier, what is it? Tell me, where are you suffering?"

This agony which had come so suddenly upon the child had interrupted him in a duty. It was contrary to his training to have missed his evening lesson. It weighed upon his conscience, and through his nervous lips he asked for an acquittal:

"Mamma, I tried to get the book. I didn't forget."

His words were broken by a new spasm of pain, and he carried both hands to his side. Mrs. Wallace leaned over him and asked again:

"Is it here? Is this where you are suffering?"

His head, as it rolled on the pillow, nodded "Yes" to her. She put her hand over his.

"Let me feel. Where does it hurt the worst? Here, or here?" and as she spoke the last word, probing into the boy's side, he twisted his wiry body in a convulsion and then lay still.

His mother, seeing that he no longer groaned, put aside her gloves and hat, and from the drawer of a table which stood in the corner with an army of medicine bottles on its oilcloth top she took a thermometer.

"Ballestier"—she leaned over him—"I am going to take your temperature." And when she had

slipped the glass between his teeth she said, pulling out her watch:

"Keep your lips closed for a minute."

High among the fine black lines the mercury found its way, telling with an appeal more convincing to science than the tortured demonstrations of the little human instrument that the boy was in a fever which could not last without threatening his life.

Mrs. Wallace was not alarmed, but she felt that Ballestier's apparent physical uneasiness, accompanied by so high a temperature, justified her in calling at once for the Doctor.

While they waited for him to arrive she helped the boy out of his clothes and put him to bed. It was he who directed her as to where she would find the brush, the comb, the soap, his night-drawers, and his dressing-gown. He had been trained by his governess to take entire care of himself, his mother reserving herself for the hours when, in furthering his mental and physical development, she might do for him more than anybody could.

Suddenly, now, she thought of Ballestier's mornings, of his preparation for the day, of the hours when he got ready for bed. Thus for the first time put in touch with objects which constituted the most human part of his short existence, he assumed for her a new personality. It was with something like tenderness that she regarded his small bedroom slippers worn down at the heel.

"Is the pain any better? Do you feel more comfortable, dear?" she asked, as she settled the pillows and the thin body relaxed into them.

"I'm so thirsty," he murmured. "Couldn't I have a drink?"

"I'm afraid not. We must wait for the Doctor."

Water of all the things, the Doctor said when he had arrived and made his examination, would be most harmful to the child. He had an acute attack of appendicitis. If his fever kept up an operation would be imperative by morning.

"Is your husband here?" the Doctor asked in the hall, where Mrs. Wallace had followed him.

"No," she answered. "He is in Albany on business."

The Doctor's tone was grave.

"Of course we can tell nothing for a few hours. The child's general condition is not what it should be. He has been below par for months. Under these circumstances an operation is undesirable. If, however, there is no change during the night, we cannot hesitate. In this case it would be advisable, I think, for you to telegraph to the child's father."

Mr. Wallace was sent for. The nurse came by night, but the Doctor having requested a consultation with one of the eminent surgeons as soon as he could be found, Mrs. Wallace waited up without undressing.

Ballestier was restless; he spoke only to ask for water. Sometimes the words did not come; it was his lips—his dry, parched lips that made the sound of thirst. At ten the nurse took his temperature; it had gone up half a degree.

Mrs. Wallace began to be uneasy. She wanted to question the child, to reassure herself; but even close to the bed she could not speak with him; he was already far away, separated from her by illness, deadly illness; it had come between them like an enemy hostile to both; it rose like a wall, beyond which Ballestier was perhaps touching the limits of another world.

She was relieved at midnight by the sound of the outdoor bell, which announced the return of the doctors for consultation. The great specialist was in evening dress; he had been dining out when the Doctor's message reached him. There was a white flower in his buttonhole; an odour of bay rum, burgundy, and carbolic floated about him; on the little finger of the hand which went straight with a professional adroitness to the spot which wrung a cry from Ballestier he wore several heavy rings in the gold of which were embedded alternate turquoises and diamonds. He arrived from some scene of festivity. He had no further visits to make that night, yet his manner was curt and brusque. He hurried as one whose moments have each a given price. Though he should stay longer, he could not ask more for his consultations, but com-

manding such sums as he did, he was unable to give any of his time to any one.

A short examination sufficed to determine the immediate necessity for an operation. He asked no questions about Ballestier's general health and habits; he did not seek any explanation for this sudden attack; it was not with past, but present conditions that his science occupied itself; it was not the general system, but the irregularity of diseases, that he took into account; it was not the child, but its malady which he proposed to treat. He knew in advance the course which such a case must follow. The accidents occasioned by the temperament of his patient he disregarded in order to more freely give himself to a scientific understanding of the case.

Directly the operation was decided upon, Mrs. Wallace felt reassured. There was plenty for her to do. The nurse would give Ballestier the attention he required, and she did not need to stand useless and watch the boy suffer.

She kept one of the servants up, and together they prepared for the operation the room in which Mr. Wallace slept when he was at home.

They moved out the furniture, took down the curtains, cleared away the rugs and pictures, scrubbed the walls and floors, hung them with fresh linen sheets, and as the gray of the winter dawn crept over the smoky roof-tops the faithful servant who had been busy with Mrs. Wallace looked at



this strange white vault which they had prepared, and brushing his rough hand across his eyes he said:

"Mr. Ballestier's such a favourite. Somehow you get more attached to a child that's always ailing, but it seems now as though we were getting him ready for the grave." And the tears told that perhaps the feeble source of life so repressed and tortured on its way abovestairs had to the more simple hearts below found natural access.

"Please don't give way to your emotion, William," Mrs. Wallace commented. "I shall have constant need of you in the days to come, and tears can help no one—remember that."

The Albany express was in at six. Mr. Wallace had reached the house by seven. He asked to see his son before the doctors began to operate.

"I am afraid it is too late," his wife responded, as she took from him his overcoat and the bundle of newspapers with which he had arrived. "They are giving Ballestier the ether, and they sent me from the room."

"But if anything should happen?" the man queried, appealing to her pitifully, as he had in all that concerned the child. "I should never see him again!"

"If it is contrary to the doctors' orders I am sure you will not insist. We want to help them all we can, and not put our own feelings in opposition to what is best for Ballestier."

The man's thoughts were following a sad course, opened by this sudden approach of danger in his home—this home with which, dear as it cost, he had never had time to grow familiar, though he prized it as the rarest of his possessions. He scarcely knew his son in reality, yet he had never made a business trip, talking by the way with those he knew and with those whom he met merely in passing, but that again and again in his conversation Ballestier's name had come proudly to his lips. The child had been ill the morning he left New York; he had not seen him to say good-by. Ballestier was perhaps now himself embarked upon the longest of all journeys—and they would not let his father see him. And if he died——

"No," he said to his wife, with a decision that surprised her, "I shall not have this." And he went alone to the room, opened the door, and approached the table where the child was stretched. The nurse motioned to him—the doctors continued what they had to do.

Mr. Wallace's mind, acute as a machine in perfect order for all questions of commerce and finance, was strange to emotion of any kind. Problems of buying and selling ran through his quick wits like a flash, to find their solution before others had divined it. The imperfect instrument of this hard-working business father was his heart. A flood of pain broke from it now, and its course through his veins was slow anguish. He knew no

expression for his grief; his throat contracted; he was trembling. An effort to speak ended in inarticulate sounds. Before his tightly closed eyes glared the image of Ballestier's body as it lay, the arms outstretched, the head thrown back, the mouth open. The lips were blue, and they yawned across a dark space left by the missing first teeth.

It was this that riveted the father's pity. The child was a hero now, under the surgeon's knife. He could wring compassion from the heartless, but whatever suffering he might have had when the small white teeth had been pulled was intimate, significant, and no one had cared. It was the first time Mr. Wallace had ever thought of Ballestier's teeth. It seemed to him more irreparable—this loss which he had ignored—than the stream of scarlet which had spurted from the baby's side, expelling his life's blood to make way for the surgeon's steel.

Mr. Wallace could not open his eyes again. He reached out helplessly, groping against the wall to the door. On the bed in his wife's room he threw himself down, an old man, to await what the doctors might say.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Little Ballestier Goes to Sleep

"Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break."
—Tennyson.

For forty-eight hours Mr. Wallace had not had off his clothes. He dragged a mattress out into the hall, and it was there that he spent the nights. He would have watched by the bedside, but Mrs. Wallace explained that Ballestier and the nurse sufficiently exhausted the air. The presence of another grown-up could only lessen the child's strength and chances of recovery.

From his legs to his waist the bandages held fast the boy's narrow body. Flat on his back he lay, his eyes alone moving, always moving, his hands travelling restlessly up and down the sheets. Occasionally a moan sounded from the narrow chest. To Mr. Wallace it seemed that the time would never come when he could speak again with his son.

Cramped and miserable he waited by the door, bent in the attitude of suspense. Sometimes in the night he fancied that he heard the feeble voice: "Father! Papa!"

He started up from his mattress bed, listening until the silence became a confusion of sounds.

All his fortune he would have given to hear the child call for him, but within the sick-room nobody had stirred.

When, the second morning, the Doctor opened the wound to dress it afresh, the faint groan which broke often from Ballestier's lips rose to a cry of anguish. The drops of perspiration started out from his forehead and rolled down over the swollen blue veins of his temples. In the struggle which he made to endure from nurse and surgeons what his training had taught him to respect, he did not once appeal to his parents. He clenched his fists, his head went from side to side of the pillow, he screamed aloud when the suffering became acute, but he bore it alone. Only after the Doctor had finished he motioned to him.

"Don't you think"—his voice was almost inaudible—"that before you begin again you might wait until I am a little older?"

Mrs. Wallace could not understand the change which had taken place in her husband. He refused to receive even the messages which were sent from the office; he talked to her of giving up his work altogether; the only thing which roused his interest was planning for Ballestier's convalescence. This man, who had for so many years lived for business alone, had suddenly from the vortex of business caught sight of Death, whom no man could bribe, no money deter.

The child was better; the red line of the fever

bulletin, which had risen high among the fatal temperatures, was returning to the level of hope.

The day nurse had gone out for exercise, and while Ballestier dozed Mr. Wallace was allowed to watch in the sick-room. Tenderly he planned in his thoughts for the boy's recovery. He would give up business altogether for a time and take him to the South. They would read together, play together, live together. As he studied the little invalid furtively, fearing to wake him, he fancied that they were already friends. But when Ballestier opened his eyes there was something between indifference and fear in their expression as he looked at his father.

"You don't need to wait, papa," he said after some time. "I don't need anything."

Mr. Wallace went awkwardly to the bedside. He lifted up the thin hand from the coverlid, where it lay like a shadow. His lips were trembling, his heart was overflowing, but in the confusion of tenderness so new to him he remained silent. There was nothing he could say. He wanted the boy to live, so that in acts, not words, he might show what he felt. The boy must live. It was this thought which rose above all others with a yearning that sought response from a higher source than any upon earth. Mr. Wallace's supplication for his son's life was finding its way upward to the unknown power, the Creator to whom in his busy existence he had never called. The frailty of all things had



appeared to him vividly with this sudden illness of a child whom he considered as a certainty in his home. Now he saw how fleeting and finite were the four corners of his existence—not rocks, but shifting sands to build upon. Man was insufficient for man. Who could tell how limited might be the power of these doctors? What they knew they had learned for themselves or from other men. What control had they over life and death? What stability was there in their promises, since the spark was not theirs to give or to preserve? What strength had they of which he was not himself possessed? But beyond the earth—Mr. Wallace's thoughts were formulating as he stood by the boy's bedside—somewhere beyond us, above us, was the power which had sent this gift to him, this living treasure. It had come from God.

"Oh, God," the words rose to his lips, "spare me my child!"

And sinking down upon his knees he prayed.

Ballestier watched him. He did not know that men ever cried. They had told him that if he wanted to be a man he must never shed a tear. He was weak and listless. So many strange things had happened he could not follow them in his thoughts, but he was sure that it must be something terrible that made his father weep.

From that time there was an unspoken sympathy between the boy and the man.

It was Mr. Wallace who noticed first that a change

had come over his son. For twenty-four hours he had been so much better that his mother had gone about her usual occupations.

It was toward five in the afternoon when the father took up his post by the invalid. Without, it was storming furiously. Sudden gusts of wind blew the rain and sleet against the window—long fingers of snow and ice, how like a beckoning hand they passed!

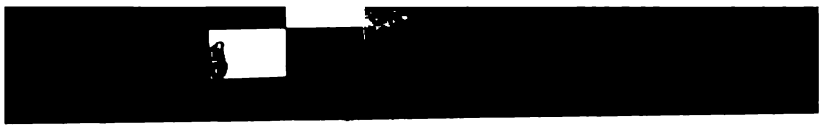
Mr. Wallace drew the curtains and watched in the firelight. Ballestier, uneasy, tossed from side to side of the bed. When it came time for the medicine, which the nurse had placed ready on the table, he refused to take it. His voice was a whisper. He spoke as though some one were trying to overhear what he wanted to say only to his father.

"I can't take it. Don't you see it is not clean? Mother wouldn't let me have it!"

And while Mr. Wallace felt the wave of despair go over him at the thought that Ballestier was becoming delirious, the child opened wide his eyes, looked directly at his father, and then put out his hand and took the medicine as though he knew nothing of what he had been saying. It was only a few moments before he began again.

"I think I had better get dressed now. Fraulein will scold if I am not ready. I am never to keep her waiting."

Then silence again, and it seemed to Mr. Wallace



that his heart beat above the purring of the fire. He waited.

"Can't you help me, father? I shall be late."

He was struggling to free himself from the clothes and to get out of bed. Mr. Wallace reasoned with him:

"It is storming. We shan't be able to start yet. I am not ready, either, you know."

But as though the ice-fingers upon the pane had some imperative message for the sick boy, he held to his purpose. Reasoning was useless with a mind that wandered. The battle hitherto had been between sickness and health. That which began now was between life and death. Except for the moments of lucidity, when Ballestier looked at his father and spoke a few words in a natural voice, he was like a stranger to him—like some nervous, tormented creature preparing for a journey. He threw the sheets from him; his hands pulled at the bandages about his hips; he tried to unfasten his night-gown. He was rigid with determination.

"You won't help me! Nobody will help me!"

Not daring to leave him long enough to call the nurse, Mr. Wallace rang and sent for her. She arrived in a dressing-gown, and with a professional precision she went about the sick-room routine. But it was impossible to take the patient's temperature. When she put the thermometer under his arm the boy flung it away from him.

"It's not clean! Can't you see it's dirty?"

"How long has he been like this?" she asked.

"An hour, I should think," was the distracted answer. "Don't you believe we had better have a consultation?"

Late in the night the surgeons who had operated on Ballestier came back together. Mrs. Wallace took part in their conversation and in all that passed between them as though she were a third consultant. She seemed more absorbed by the doctors than in the patient. It was from science rather than from life itself that she expected enlightenment.

As though Ballestier suspected that the return of the two specialists threatened new torture, he suddenly recovered possession of himself. The flow of meaningless words was arrested. He lay crimson, immovable on his pillow. But every one—his father, the nurse, Mrs. Wallace even—had been present during his moments of delirium, which the doctors considered a dangerous symptom. Once informed of it, they shook their heads gravely.

"It means infection—that is what it means," said one.

"Yet," answered the other, "we never had a more successful operation."

"And having suppressed the cause——"

"The effect should disappear."

"But there may be an increase of inflammation; it may have reached the intestines."

"And what then?" asked Mrs. Wallace with a

sudden pang. It occurred to her with anguish that those whom she followed blindly as infallible were balked—that they felt the quicksands of science shifting under them. Still her faith was not so swiftly shattered in her gods. She put her question to them again:

"Couldn't you open the intestines in that case? I know that this is something commonly done under similar conditions."

The two men looked at each other. It was the older who said:

"The child is extremely feeble."

This met with no contradiction from his colleague. Mrs. Wallace, not wishing to reproach herself afterward with any weakness as to another operation, said:

"If you think it necessary to make another incision, you must not hesitate, you know."

On his pillow Ballestier stirred slightly. Mr. Wallace paid no attention to the surgeons. He had not taken his eyes from his son. In an angry whisper he said:

"I beg of you to discuss the question somewhere else. The boy can hear everything that you say."

When again he and Ballestier were alone the child looked up at him. There was an unspoken word in his eyes, an appeal for protection such as the father had never seen there before.

"Papa," said Ballestier in a plaintive voice.

"Yes, dear; I am here."

"Come nearer. I want to ask you something—it is only for you."

"What is it, my child?"

"Promise me, papa——"

Something choked him; the words could not pass his throat. But Ballestier had a message; he made a supreme effort to pronounce it.

"I don't want them to cut me open again. Promise that you won't let them!"

"But, Ballestier, my boy, if they can make you well?"

"I don't want to get well, papa."

His decision was as prompt as though life were a toy which one may catch up or let fall at will. The father was miserable. It was he who was the weaker of the two. His very resignation, he hoped, might impress Ballestier more than any argument.

"Why don't you want to get well, my precious child? Haven't you been happy with us?"

"I am so tired," the boy murmured—"so tired. I want to go to sleep, papa. Will you hold my hand while I rest? I don't want anything but sleep."

And little Wallace closed his eyes.

. . . . . .

The hand which his father holds is no longer burning with fever. How tight it clasps the father's hand!

Confidence too long ignored has come as a final bond.

The sweetness of this parting trust plays like a smile about the lips of the child who will wake no more.

CHAPTER XXIX

Phillip Has Something to Say

" For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight ;
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."—Pope.

The question of returning to the Moorlands had not been discussed between Phillip and Madeleine since his arrival. The impatience expressed in his letters from the ranch had prompted preparatory excuses in Madeleine's mind with which to oppose her husband's desire. His silence on the subject was unexpected and perplexing. At first she seemed inclined to believe that Phillip was becoming more lenient—that he wanted to study, as she had, the questions of the day as they presented themselves in a city. Then, seeing that his attitude remained unchanged and that her new occupations awakened neither his approval nor his interest, she became uneasy. If he had openly opposed her she might have resisted, or she could have given in as a victim to the husband's will. But this silence on his part acted in a peculiar way toward disengaging her enthusiasm. It was with coquetry for Phillip that she had made efforts in his absence for progress, believing by this to gain a surer place in his affections. There were moments now when she

longed to beat a hasty retreat over the road she travelled alone. This she felt would be weakness. She must not abandon the course. Phillip must come about to her way of thinking.

The conviction that she was right, and, above all, pride in her new experiences, fortified her resistance. She was no longer trustful. The merest conversation begun amicably ended invariably in a discussion which added girth to the breach that was widening between the husband and the wife. When Phillip resisted her Madeleine was exasperated; when he showed no opposition she suffered, thinking that he no longer cared for her. She had supposed that he would by his approval assume the responsibility of her conversion, and because he had failed her in this she was too lonely to proceed, too vain to retreat.

Her own suffering was self-inflicted, and, like women in general, she could not bear to make herself miserable without making somebody else miserable at the same time. She would soon have tired of keeping her fictitious wrongs to herself. The only way she could realise them was to communicate her unhappiness to her husband.

Phillip was unruffled. His inward distress was too deep for any superficial agitation. Knowing herself in the wrong, Madeleine combined unconsciously to provoke from him an injury, some offending word spoken in anger which would shift upon his shoulders the wrongs of the situation.

Having parted from her husband coldly in the morning, *en route* for a slumming expedition, Madeleine was hurt on reaching home to find a telephone message in which Phillip announced that he was lunching with Doctor Morrison at the club. Phillip had met the celebrated physician at the club door. They had begun a conversation together, and the busy man, yielding to Dillon's argument that he must find time to eat somewhere, had consented to lunch with him.

They chose a quiet table in a corner of the smaller dining-room. Morrison unfolded his napkin and pushed his knives and forks aside deliberately. Nothing about him suggested hurry or unrest.

"You are the first person I have seen since I came back," Phillip said to him, "who does not appear to be in a rush!"

The Doctor smiled at the man opposite him.

"In New York even idle people have no time to lose."

"What is your work at present?"

"There is no change: the hospital, the university, and private practice. We are increasing the course of medical training, making it more difficult to pass the examinations, and so on."

It was not about medical students that Dillon wished to hear the Doctor talk.

"Your patients," he asked, "are almost entirely women, are they not?"

"Yes," the Doctor responded. "Men are too

busy to take care of themselves in this country. The American man uses himself up with work, and he dies as he has done everything else—in a rush. When I came back from my first journey abroad I was struck by this. I saw that if I wanted to be a successful practitioner I would better make women my specialty or I shouldn't have anything to practise on!"

He seemed to be on a favourite subject. Phillip let him talk, adapting what he said to theories of his own.

"The reaction from this strenuous life of the men is felt chiefly by the women. They are the ones who suffer. I can assure you"—his tone was serious—"that the majority of women I treat have become medical patients simply because they have no moral stamina. We doctors should have an auxiliary school of moral aids"—his eyes twinkled—"and our students should be the American husbands. Just to give you an example: One of my colleagues here, a man younger than I, who is making his way rapidly to the front, was married about five years ago. He is a devoted husband and father, if you like, but I don't believe he spends ten waking hours a week with his wife and child. He has no time! He has no idea what his wife is doing except in a general sort of way. I know, because she is my patient; she is travelling fast on the road to nervous prostration. She has got in, hand and glove, with a lot of women like herself whose husbands are too

busy to direct them. And you may have noticed that it doesn't take long for women left to themselves to lose their balance completely. My friend's wife is as busy as her husband. When he's thirty-five he will have performed more operations than any man in the country, and she will have founded more clubs than any woman outside of Boston. He just happens to be a doctor, but if it were not science it would be business, which even more would keep him from leading a rational existence. There's no man so ardent as the American; and there's no woman, in spite of her reputation for being spoiled—there's no woman so neglected as the American man's wife. She has two rivals: business and science. She tries to make the most of the situation by mimicking her rivals. The business man's wife is capricious and a spendthrift; the scientist's wife is a pedant. These are the two types America has produced!"

The Doctor was in a good humour. Phillip's unspoken sympathy drew him out.

"You see my point?" he queried. "The bluestocking and the courtezan? Both abnormal, hostile to their natural destiny. No children, no domestic duties, overstrained minds in the one; passion for luxury in the other; perverted, both of them, and sure to end up at a rest-cure or under the surgeon's knife. I get them by the dozen every week. You can't blame them for their depravity. It's not their fault. It is the fault of the man."

If Phillip had been wavering in the past few weeks as to what attitude he should take with Madeleine, this unconscious touch in passing tipped the balance decisively. The Doctor's wholesale condemnation of the sex startled the manliness in him. It was his own fault if Madeleine had gone astray. Silent disapproval would only aggravate her unhappiness.

"You are right, Doctor." His tone was conviction itself. "The men are to blame."

Morrison, having finished his lunch, lighted a cigar, which after a few puffs he rolled between his fingers as he continued:

"If a man's chief interests are outside of his house, the woman's will soon be, too. The banker wants a pretty wife to parade his success; the scientist wants an assistant to colour his microscope slides. The old-fashioned man wanted a mate to warm his heart and cradle his offspring. And you can be sure of one thing, Dillon—in whatever country you go, man is the lord of creation, and the sort of woman or women he wants will prevail as types in the land he inhabits! If you had seen as many physical wrecks as I have, as many women with shattered nerves or bodies diseased by their own perversity, you would conclude, as I do, that the American man of to-day wants as companion a creature who corresponds in no way to what Nature intended that women should be."

The waiter who had left them returned, bringing

a small three-cornered note, evidently folded in a hurry and written in pencil.

"You will excuse me?" Phillip asked, recognising Madeleine's handwriting.

"I am off for my afternoon round. We must do this again some day. Good-by."

They shook hands and parted.

"I am waiting for you at the door," the note read; "if you are through, please come. I need you, Phillip."

These three words, "I need you," seemed an echo to his own appeal. He hastened down the stairs with an emotion he had not felt since the day when he had broken all records to reach home a few hours sooner than he was expected.

Madeleine was at the door in a closed cab.

"Tell him to go to the park," she said.

He called to the driver, got into the carriage, and shut the door.

Madeleine lifted to her husband a tear-stained face. He took her in his arms and kissed her, and as their lips met Phillip took possession of the same Madeleine whom he had won at Elliston.

"My darling," he murmured, "you are mine."

He did not know yet what had awakened her simple tenderness; he felt only exultant that at last through this embrace her soul was his again. With the Madeleine who rested trustfully and confidingly against his shoulder as they rolled on over the driveway there was nothing of which

he could not speak, sure that she would comprehend him.

"Why were you crying, beloved," he asked, "when you came for me?" He thought of her three words, "I need you," and his heart rejoiced.

"I had such sad news just now."

Phillip looked troubled.

"I was playing with the children in the nursery when some one called on the telephone. It was Mr. Wallace. I have been there. Ballestier died this morning at four. Mr. Wallace is heart-broken. It is terrible to see him. He reproaches himself for everything. The doctors say Ballestier might have lived if he had not been so depleted when the operation was performed. Mr. Wallace can't forgive himself; he thinks it is his fault; he is pitiful; he seems like an old man already; he has wept his eyes out. And Ballestier!" Madeleine hid her face against Phillip.

"It is the first time I have ever seen death. There was such peace on his face—the peace that passes understanding. By the agony of that broken-hearted man, watching that glorified baby face, the wonderful joy of my own life suddenly revealed itself. It seemed to me I could not come fast enough to you—darling, my darling, my living Phillip. All our miserable misunderstandings seemed so useless when I looked at the beginning of eternal sleep. Before my lips should be closed forever in that silence of death I wanted them to

speak only the good, only the love in my heart. Ballestier was smiling, and there was such dignity on his face.

"Yet a little while, Phillip, such a little while, and we shall have fallen asleep like the boy. It seemed to me I could not bear the thought that there was a cloud between us—that one of the precious moments of this brief life had been given to unhappiness. I never had realised it before; it was only when I saw Ballestier. We are so much wax, each of us; we cannot escape the final seal. But, Phillip, so long as we are spared, so long as our children are spared, what can trouble us? What fictitious difficulties was I opposing—what was the matter with me, Phillip?"

They had reached that part of the park where the lake lies like a miniature mirror reflecting a universe of blue. Phillip proposed that they get down and walk.

There was a suggestion of spring in the air; the wind blew fresh over the surface of the waters.

Phillip took his wife's arm and, leaving the carriage, they strolled together while he said to Madeleine what was in his heart.

"You ask what is the matter with you, darling. It is so simple—you have been trying to live for yourself alone. It was making you miserable, and it soon would have made us both unhappy. I know so well how insufficient the resources are of individual efforts accomplished by oneself, for one-

self. I was so long a wanderer, a part of nothing; I was so long a man alone who passed on my way, men alone and women alone. I was dissatisfied until I found the secret—happiness. Madeleine, civilisation, society and all its benefits do not mean man alone and woman alone, struggling for self-development, each generation working for itself, but man and woman side by side toiling in union for the generation to come."

"Yes, Phillip." Madeleine pressed his arm against hers.

"The moment each individual starts for himself the harmony is finished. We need only look at it in our own case. Coming into contact with women who are examples of this very sort of individualism, you thought at once, almost with shame, that you were not enough of a person yourself—that you had been sacrificed for duties which some one else could spare you. Immediately our little group became unbalanced. In the families where the mother and father wish each to be independent individuals, distinct and important, the child becomes an enemy. We have seen cases of it on all sides. Mrs. Penfold, Mrs. Phipps-Brown, Grace Westervelt, even, and Martha Penfold are victims of this sort of egoism. There are various reasons which explain it. The country's youth and resources encourage a ferocious activity for material gain on the one hand, and on the other hand the absence of all tradition permits the exercise of new ideas,

religious, moral, scientific. Mrs. Phipps-Brown is a victim of the exaggerated importance inevitably attached to money in a country whose development depends upon its conquest. Ballestier is a victim to new ideas exploited by virgin minds who in their youthful arrogance disregard the experience of others. A little learning is a dangerous thing. The ignorant, like Mrs. Wallace, who have small general knowledge, and that acquired from books, abdicate even the privilege of using their common sense as something too familiar. They are as eager for new ideas, new scientific fads, as the parvenu is for new possessions. One is as vulgar as the other, as undesirable. Money is only a means—learning, science are only a means toward lessening the suffering of humanity. The vice of our generation, Madeleine, is individualism. The sudden importance which the young American society permits a man to attain through personal merit is looked upon as sufficient aim for an existence. Personal ends exclude social, even family, sentiment. Look at Mrs. Penfold's case. Look at Martha Sheffield's case, complicated as it was and is in thousands of other cases by the intermingling of cross-races which bring about the wearing inward conflict that became unbearable to her. We do not need to seek very far, dearest. The natural meaning of existence is the union of the man and the woman, that the woman may bear children, while the man defends the home. The moment either

one diverges from this destiny harmony is destroyed. Where each lives for the other in marriage the child is a hostage of love, given to prolong a finite union through infinite generations. Where each lives for himself the child becomes an enemy. Madeleine, beloved, shall our children be our enemies?"

They had reached the end of the lake road. The coachman followed, keeping his horse at a walk. Phillip motioned to him and they got in.

Madeleine held her husband's arm. Her heart was too full to speak. There were tears in her eyes, but she smiled.

At last she said:

"I know why they are unhappy, Phillip—all these women here."

"Why, darling?"

"Because they haven't got a Phillip. Their husbands don't understand. It is you, beloved, who make our happiness."

CHAPTER XXX

Home-keeping Hearts Are Happiest

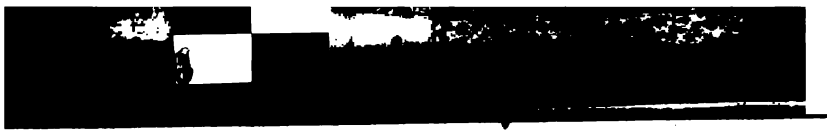
"From our own selves our joys must flow, and that dear hut our home."

It was harvest time at the Moorlands. The whispering wheat had swayed all summer like a warm sea under the wind's caress. It lay now where the sharp scythes had mowed it to the ground. A golden sun sank western over fields of gold, and in the distance, like shadows against the sunlit horizon, the reapers loaded with grain the heavy farm wagons.

Madeleine's father, Mr. Bradford, had arrived in the afternoon at the Moorlands. He had set his own time to visit his children and grandchildren. He wanted to share in the harvest festivities, when those who had sowed the seed of hope should reap the reward of their effort in the abundant fruitfulness of the earth.

Madeleine glanced toward the mantelpiece at the clock, which since her wedding-day had marked so many happy hours in the Moorlands home.

"It is six," she said. "Phillip and his dear Murray, who has come for a fortnight with us, have spent the whole day at the farm. They ought to



be back at any moment now. I promised the children that we would walk out to meet them. Do you care to go with us, papa, dear?"

Mr. Bradford got up as blithely as a young man.

"I shall be delighted," he responded. "I suppose they bring the crops back with fine style here. We ought to show our interest, at least, by being present when the harvesters return from the fields. Where are Kate and Edward?"

The children were already stationed in front of the house, where they waited impatiently their grandfather. They each took possession of a hand, clinging to him with the sort of infatuation which little people feel for the older members of the family whom they hear often mentioned but see only on rare occasions.

They walked out through the garden, all four together, and took the farm road. They were bathed in light from the setting sun, which dazzled Edward and Kate. They were delighted, when they turned to shade their eyes, at the size of their own shadows projected on the dust.

"Grandpa," cried Edward, "don't we look like giants?"

And he tried to frighten Kate by imitating the voice of the ogre in the fairy tale who insists upon eating Hop-o'-my-thumb for his supper.

As there was a rise in the ground, they could hear the farm wagons coming before they could actually see them. The evening wind brought with it

the rattling of the wheels and the voices of the teamsters as they called to the oxen. Then all at once the crest of the wheat-sheaves appeared beyond the hillside, somber against the brilliant sky. The first wagon load appeared, escorted by two mounted outriders.

"Papa!" Kate and Edward called in unison.

At the sound of their voices Phillip pressed forward his horse.

"Well! Well!" he cried. "How good of you to come, too, Mr. Bradford!"

He had dismounted and was shaking hands with his father-in-law, having confided his bridle to Edward. He put his own arm through Madeleine's and continued:

"How do you think the children are looking?"

"They have grown tremendously," responded the older man. "I scarcely recognised them. I was very much struck when I saw Kate. You remember the photograph on my study-table, don't you—the picture of my dear wife? You noticed it the first time you came to Elliston. It seems to me Kate is wonderfully like her grandmother. Not as she appears in that photograph, but as she was when we were young together—arm in arm."

His voice trembled slightly. Not wishing to cast a gloom upon his children's present joy, he hastened to add:

"I always felt, Madeleine, that your mother's spirit was in you."



The other mounted cavalier followed behind them at a discreet distance. Phillip turned. Knowing how shy Sydney Murray was, he called out by way of encouragement:

"I say, Murray, here is Mr. Bradford."

The ranchman was at his side in an instant. He felt toward Dillon's father-in-law an old debt of gratitude. By way of expressing it, he shook the old gentleman's arm so violently that his eyeglasses fell off. But, quite unruffled, he asked:

"Well, Murray, isn't this about the finest family you ever knew? When you see such children as these, doesn't it make you think about getting married yourself?"

"They are bully little cattle," the ranchman responded. He glanced indulgently at Edward, who was leading his father's horse by the bridle.

"They call me uncle! I don't ask anything more. I am too much like one of the herd myself for any girl ever to 'tie up' with me. I don't even know how to talk any more, except with the animals."

They laughed at this remark, and Phillip added:

"You know, my dear father, that you are going to see your friend Mrs. Wallace and her poor husband? They are with us at the Moorlands for a visit."

"Her husband?" exclaimed Mr. Bradford. "Gus Wallace has consented to desert his business for one single day?"

"He has been here for a month."

"He must be dangerously ill."

"Worse than that: he is a broken-hearted man" —and Phillip in a low tone added: "He lost his boy, you know—an only child. He was completely crushed; he went all to pieces. He is pitiful. Madeleine asked him down for a few days. We hesitated to do it, but we thought it might get his mind off his sorrow. He came with Mrs. Wallace, and here they still are. They go off together for long walks. They are always together, as though they were just getting acquainted. The Moorlands air has done them good."

As they talked they approached the house, and Kate, who had run ahead of the others, returned, her face radiant.

"Grandpa! Come and see the cake. It's on the table in the dining-room, with a whole crown of wheat around it, like in a fairy story!"

Mr. and Mrs. Wallace were the only somber note at the harvest dinner, which nevertheless ended in general gaiety and merrymaking. The guests wore each a wreath of wheat, like the children themselves, who wanted everybody to be in harvest attire.

"Do you remember our first dinner together?" Mr. Bradford asked his son-in-law. "Little did I suspect, when I invited you to come and talk over your lawsuit, that you were going to carry off my daughter from me!"



This subject inspired a remark from every one present.

"I am sure, Phillip," Madeleine said, "that you couldn't remember, to save your life, the colour of the dress I had on that evening."

"Of course I do," he answered gaily. "You had a mauve gown. I certainly shouldn't be a very deserving husband if I had forgotten such an important detail as that."

It was Murray's turn:

"There was nothing Dillon didn't see that night. I think he left his wits at Elliston that first visit. It was quite evident when he got back to the ranch. If you could only have watched him waiting for your answer to his letter! He had sent it over to the railroad by a good-for-nothing boy who never goes on any sort of an errand without foundering the horse that carries him. I should have got rid of him long ago, you may be sure, but Dillon won't hear of it. We've still got him on the ranch."

"He was once the bearer of such good news," murmured Phillip.

When dinner was over, it was Mr. Bradford who rose and proposed a toast.

"It is my place," he said, "being the oldest, to drink to the health of the others, who are only at the outset of life. The home of my dear children is indeed a blessed one. It is built upon fruitful ground."

He turned toward Mr. Wallace, who was very pale, and added gently:

"Every parcel of earth holds a promise of new life. Let us give thanks for to-day, for to-morrow. Let us have hope, my friends."

Coffee was served in Phillip's study, and as dinner had been early on account of the children there was light enough in the sky for lamps to be unnecessary.

"Madeleine," said Mrs. Wallace, "I got a long letter this afternoon from Mrs. Lemon. She gives me a lot of New York news which I am sure will interest you. You can't be more surprised than I at what she says."

She drew her hostess on to the sofa by her side. Murray was talking over with Mr. Bradford the final settlements of the lawsuit. Mr. Wallace and Phillip stood together by the open window.

"I owe you a deep debt of gratitude," Mr. Wallace was saying. "You and Mrs. Dillon have done us the greatest good since we have been here."

Taking his hand, Phillip answered:

"We had an idea the Moorlands air might brace you up a bit, it is such a healthy place."

"I am not speaking only," Mr. Wallace went on, "of the physical strength that has come back in this outdoor existence, but I refer to the moral atmosphere one breathes here. You have understood life; you have grasped the aim of existence. I ignored it. I set out upon the wrong road—my way was cut short by death."



His eyes were full of tears.

"Oh! If I could have known! If my boy could have stayed here in the country with your children last year when his mother brought him to the Moorlands, he would perhaps be living now. He——"

The heartbroken father could not go on. He gazed before him into the increasing darkness of the night. After a few moments he touched Phillip's arm.

"Forgive me," he said slowly, "for casting a shadow over your merrymaking in this way. Sorrow renders a man selfish. What I started to tell you is something not sad, but happy."

As he pronounced these words his lips contracted with suppressed emotion.

"God has had mercy on us. He has confided to us the promise of a new life. My prayer is that we may have another son. I want the child to be born here, Dillon—somewhere near your home, away from surgeons and systems, away from the city. I thought perhaps Mrs. Dillon would help us to find a house in this neighbourhood if such a thing is possible. I would like it to be near you, because you have done us such worlds of good—and in remembrance of Ballestier."

Phillip and Madeleine were delighted at having the house full of friends, who seemed to reflect their own happiness. But they were impatient for the moment when they might be alone together

again. At last the Wallaces withdrew. Mr. Bradford went down to his rooms on the ground floor. Madeleine had been up on tip-toe to see how the children were sleeping after the excitement of the evening. Returning, Phillip said to her:

"What do you say to a little stroll in the garden, now that all is quiet, before we go to bed ourselves?"

"I should love it," she said, "the night is so mild."

Mysteriously, like lovers, they walked stealthily across the gravel in order not to be heard by the inmates of the house, and as soon as they were under the shadow of the trees Phillip put his arm about Madeleine.

"You can't imagine," she said, "all the news Mrs. Wallace got to-day in a letter from Mrs. Lemon."

"Don't tell me anything that makes you sad—not to-night," was Phillip's answer.

Madeleine was animated.

"There are some that are really funny and others that one feels like crying over. Poor Alida has got to undergo a frightful operation. The surgeons say it is necessary if she is not to remain a invalid. Grace has gone to a sort of rest-cure for nervous diseases in Switzerland, where the doctors keep her shut up quite alone. This is disheartening even to think of. I don't know whether it is because I look at things nowadays

with your eyes, Phillip, but I simply cannot take seriously the adventures of Mary Evans and Bobby and Bobby's wife."

"Isn't Mrs. Phipps-Brown happy in the new marriage?" Phillip asked, a shade of sarcasm entering into his tone.

"It seems," she answered, "that they did not get on peacefully for a month, even. Bobby insisted upon going to Newport for the summer, driving from New York all the way; she insisted that she would not go, and she had not married him to be dragged around for exhibition as a pretty lady on the box seat of his coach. She went off alone to France; she is at Trouville. If she does not respond to Bobby's command that she return immediately to the conjugal domicile, he is going to begin proceedings for a divorce, and has written her to this effect."

"I never suspected that marriage was an institution for which either Bobby or Mrs. Phipps-Brown was exactly fitted. They are no sooner united than they wish to be free again. And Mary Evans? What has happened to the argumentative young college graduate who had such masterly reasons for despising the creatures of my sex?"

"The last thing you could have expected. I could not believe it if it were anybody but Mrs. Lemon who circulated such a report, but she is so indulgent to others. You know Grace Westervelt had a mechanician for her automobile. He was

seriously hurt the day of the accident when poor Stone was killed."

"Yes," said Phillip. "Well?"

"He was a fine-looking fellow—a blue-eyed Irishman, big and strapping, like a policeman. He had the gift of gab, it appears. He was sent after the accident to the hospital where Mary Evans visits twice a week. She took an interest in him, first on account of Grace, and then—this is the gossip—on account of the man himself. She used to go and read to him and take him all sorts of things. In the course of time he recovered from the shock and his various bruises healed, but Mary still insisted upon taking care of him, and used all her influence with the hospital authorities so that he might stay as a convalescent. Finally the doctors had enough of it. They turned him out one fine day, and then, if you please, Mary begged her father to send away Tom, the servant, who has been with him for years, and have this Irishman in his place! Mr. Evans naturally refused, and Mary was so furious that she left her father's house, and she has gone down to the Settlement to live!"

Phillip laughed heartily. He remembered the superior air with which Mary Evans, the college graduate, had treated him every time they had chanced to meet in New York.

"I have heard of kings marrying shepherdesses," he said, "but the infatuation of the highly educated young woman for an automobile driver whose only

merits are physical is as deliciously clever a touch of avenging Nature as the sudden condescension of the aforesaid king!"

"Wait, Phillip," said Madeleine. "I am not through yet. There is still more news for you about the poor foolish virgins. You can afford to laugh, but I feel mortified when I think how these creatures of my sex rush headlong to their ruin as soon as they try to emancipate themselves in any other way than through the protection of an honest man who loves them and by following their natural destiny as wives and mothers."

"Darling," he murmured. "My wife!"

She went on:

"You remember Fanny, don't you—the maid we had, who left us about a year ago to go and work in the factories?"

"Mills's daughter?" Phillip asked. "What has become of her? Mills has never spoken of her."

"She came to the house this morning. It seems that as soon as she went into the factory she became engaged to a perfectly respectable sort of fellow, who came to see her regularly all the winter. Suddenly Fanny refused to have anything more to do with him. Not only does she refuse to marry him, but she declares that she doesn't want ever to marry anybody. She wants to go to a New York factory."

"Of course," said Phillip.

"I asked her why she had taken this decision,

and she said: 'So as to be more independent—to have more fun. I want to get on in the world. Here I can't improve myself.' "

They walked on together in the refreshing night, Madeleine leaning on the strong arm of her husband. Suddenly she stopped and hid close against him, half-tender, half-ashamed:

"I can't tell you," she said, "what an impression this Fanny made upon me. When I was a little girl I used to be naughty sometimes with my nurse. If it was at night that I got into a temper, she would make me stop and look at my shadow on the wall. There I could see a gigantic and ridiculous repetition of my own angry gestures. It always stopped me, terrified. Well, you know, Fanny, with her absurd stories about city life and city ways, produced exactly the same impression on me as the nursery phantom. I seemed to be seeing, while she talked, the caricature of what I was for a moment in New York, myself, when all those misguided, pedantic women turned my head with their ideas, and got me on a false track which led straight away from my happiness."

Phillip listened spellbound to what she was saying.

"Thank you, beloved," she added, "for having rescued me with such tenderness and firmness. Do you know, darling, that you have made my conquest a second time?"

They had reached the end of the shaded walk.

Suddenly above the sloping lawn the house came into sight.

The upper windows were feebly lighted by the night lamp which burned in the children's room. On the ground-floor Mr. Bradford's corner was not yet in obscurity, and between the two by the open shutter of the balcony their own room glowed in the night.

"Look," Phillip said to his wife. "It seems as though the home were watching with us; as though it waited for us; as though it rejoiced with us in our perfect love."

THE END





THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building

